

# The Removal of Cares (Ḥalāʾ Al-Khawāṭir)

A COLLECTION OF FORTY-FIVE DISCOURSES



SHAIKH ʿABD AL-QĀDIR AL-JĪLĀNĪ

TRANSLATED FROM THE ARABIC BY MUHTAR HOLLAND

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AL-BAZ PUBLISHING, INC.  
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...urkuḍ bi-rijlik: “*Strike [the ground] with thy foot....*” (Qur’ān 38:42)

Cover calligraphy: Rohana Filippi

Using watercolor and wax to combine the beauty of Arabic script with the Qur’ānic message on paper, Italian artist Rohana Filippi has developed her own artistic style through personal research and inner inspiration. Her art is entirely devoted to “expressing Allāh’s presence everywhere.”

Ms. Filippi, who currently resides in Canada, has lived and worked in England, Mexico, Colombia and the United States.

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## Publisher's Preface

The words of Shaikh 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī can undoubtedly be considered among the most precious treasures of Islām. Indeed, Al-Baz Publishing was founded with the intention of providing fine English translations of his works for the benefit of English-speaking Muslims everywhere, in the spirit of wishing to share the benefit and blessing we have received ourselves at his hand.

I first became interested in Shaikh 'Abd al-Qādir (may Allah be well pleased with him) in learning from my own spiritual guide and benefactor Bapak Muhammad Sumohadiwidjojo, founder of the Subud brotherhood (may Allāh be well pleased with him), that Allāh had bestowed on the Shaikh the same opening and contact that Bapak himself received from Allāh, and which he has passed on to us.

Anyone familiar with the *latihan kejiwaan* of Subud will know that to be so honored, as Bapak was by Almighty God, is a rare occurrence in the history of mankind, for such grace is usually bestowed on very few of His creatures. My interest thus being aroused, I sought out the surviving manuscripts from their various repositories around the world, and began the task of having them translated. From the very first reading it was apparent to me that what Bapak had said about the Shaikh was true.

O reader! This endeavor is for you! If you find benefit in the reading of these talks, pray that Allāh bless the Shaikh, and pray for us too, that our offering may find acceptance in His sight!

Ruslan Moore  
Al-Baz Publishing, Inc.  
February, 1997



## Acknowledgments

*All praise is due to Allāh, the Beneficent, the Merciful!*

We bear witness that there is no god except Allāh, and that Muḥammad is the Messenger of Allāh!

Our Lord, thank You for giving us this wholesome task!



Grateful thanks to Muhtar Holland for devoting years of his life to translating these works; may Allāh bless him! Grateful thanks to Suliman Ghoor, his family and family friends, without whose help the publishing of these volumes might have been delayed by years. Especial thanks too, to Gul Zareen Khan who went to Pakistan and obtained a version for us of this extremely rare work, which, although listed as available in many of the libraries of the world, always proved to be something else. Thanks also to the many who have helped make this publication possible, among them the following:

Dr. Hars Kurio of the Staatsbibliothek Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin  
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## Translator's Introduction

Can it really be appropriate to begin by discussing the outward appearance of the text presented in this volume, rather than its inner content? Well, Shaikh 'Abd al-Qādir (may Allāh be well pleased with him) has spoken of “an outward appearance [*ẓāhir*] that has an inner content [*bātin*] to prove its authenticity, and an inner reality that has an outer manifestation to confirm it.” May this be true of our effort to translate and publish his recorded discourses, and may our shortcomings be forgiven!

The publisher has chosen to print the main body of this work in a strong, bold font. The footnotes are fainter and smaller, for obvious reasons of contrast and economy of space. It is the other exception that needs to be explained: namely, the fact that certain passages in the text—and even a few whole pages—are printed in plain, non-bold font. The passages concerned are also recorded in the latter part of *The Sublime Revelation [al-Faṭḥ ar-Rabbānī]*,<sup>1</sup> and this style of printing makes it easy to identify them at a glance.

According to the anonymous Prologue to *The Removal of Cares [Jalā' al-Khawāṭir]*,<sup>2</sup> the first of these forty-five discourses was delivered on the 9th of Rajab, and the last on the 14th of Ramaḍān, in the year A.H. 546/1152 C.E. This raises some intriguing questions about the compilation of the last four discourses in *The Sublime Revelation [al-Faṭḥ ar-Rabbānī]*, and about the dates therein assigned to them. The situation may be outlined as follows:

### 1. Dates traditionally assigned:

*The Sublime Revelation [al-Faṭḥ ar-Rabbānī]* :

- 59th Discourse: 9th Rajab, A.H. 546.
- 60th Discourse: 13th Rajab, A.H. 546.
- 61st Discourse: 20th Rajab, A.H. 546.
- 62nd (final) Discourse: last day of Rajab, A.H. 546.

<sup>1</sup> For specific references to the pages concerned—in the Al-Baz edition of *The Sublime Revelation [al-Faṭḥ ar-Rabbānī]*—see footnotes at relevant points in the text of the present work.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 5 below.

*The Removal of Cares [Jalā' al-Khawāṭir] :*

- 1st Discourse: 9th Rajab, A.H. 546.
- 2nd–44th Discourses: between 9th Rajab and 14th Ramaḍān, A.H. 546.
- 45th (final) Discourse: 14th Ramaḍān, A.H. 546.

**2. Contents:**

- *Jalā'* 1, 2 and 45 include passages recorded in *Faṭḥ* 59.
- *Jalā'* 3 includes passages recorded in *Faṭḥ* 60.
- *Jalā'* 5 includes passages recorded in *Faṭḥ* 60–61.
- *Jalā'* 6–8 include passages recorded in *Faṭḥ* 61.
- *Jalā'* 9–13, 15, 17, 19, 23, 25–27, 31–33 and 37 include passages recorded in *Faṭḥ* 62.
- *Jalā'* 45 includes passages recorded in *Faṭḥ* 59 and 61.

**3. Most obvious conclusions:**

- Of the material contained in *The Removal of Cares [Jalā' al-Khawāṭir]*, by far the greater part is new, in the sense that it has not been recorded elsewhere, whether in *The Sublime Revelation [al-Faṭḥ ar-Rabbānī]* or other compilations. In many of the forty-five discourses, notably the longer ones toward the end (38–44), there is no repetition whatsoever.

- The text compiled as the 60th Discourse of *The Sublime Revelation [al-Faṭḥ ar-Rabbānī]* records only some of the utterances delivered by Shaikh 'Abd al-Qādir (may Allāh be well pleased with him)—not only on 13th Rajab, but also at a slightly later date.

- The text compiled as the 61st Discourse of the same work is likewise incomplete, and the dating is not entirely accurate.

- The text compiled as the 62nd Discourse of the same work is actually a partial record of talks delivered over a period of several weeks.

**4. Most puzzling feature:**

- The inclusion in *Jalā'* 45, as well as in *Jalā'* 1 and 2, of passages recorded in *Faṭḥ* 59 and 61.

These points are simply presented here, without further elaboration or attempted elucidation, in the hope that they may prove useful to researchers, both amateur and scholarly. Even in this present age of electronic technology (as most of us, no doubt, are all too well aware), many problems impede the complete and accurate recording, editing and eventual publication of unrehearsed

speeches, followed (and often interrupted) by question-and-answer sessions. Truly remarkable is the work accomplished, with pen and ink, by the on-the-spot recorders, and by the subsequent compilers and disseminators of Shaikh 'Abd al-Qādir's live discourses, delivered in those very lively sessions. If we are curious about details regarding their identity, the nature and extent of their collaboration, and the arrangement and dating of their manuscripts, our curiosity is surely inspired by grateful admiration. May the All-Generous One increase their spiritual reward on our behalf.

### Concerning the title of the present work:

As mentioned in my introduction to *The Sublime Revelation [al-Faṭḥ ar-Rabbānī]*, the title sometimes presents the translator with a thornier linguistic problem than any item in the text itself. In the present case, the difficulty is compounded by the existence of differing versions of one word in the Arabic title, and two possible readings of another.

Except for special purposes,<sup>3</sup> short vowels are generally unmarked in the Arabic script. The first word in the title is therefore written simply as *j-l-ā'*, which may represent either *jalā'* or *jilā'*.<sup>4</sup> The prefix *al-* is merely the Arabic equivalent of the definite article ("the"). The next word appears in some instances as *kh-ā-ṭ-r*, and elsewhere as *kh-w-ā-ṭ-r*. Without question, these spellings represent *khāṭir* and *khawāṭir* respectively. When deciding how best to translate the original title, it is therefore necessary to consider the possible meanings of four variants, namely:

• *Jalā' al-Khāṭir* • *Jilā' al-Khāṭir* • *Jalā' al-Khawāṭir* • *Jilā' al-Khawāṭir*.<sup>5</sup>

The verbal nouns *jalā'* and *jilā'* are both derived from the Arabic root *j-l-w*, which embodies the basic idea of "clear manifestation." Where the corresponding verb is used intransitively, the verbal noun signifies: "being (or becoming) clear, unobscured, exposed to view." The transitive applications cover a fascinating range, including: "making something clear; displaying the bride unveiled;

<sup>3</sup> Notably to ensure correct reading of the Qur'ān and quotations therefrom.

<sup>4</sup> The form *julā'* is also theoretically possible, but no such word occurs in the Arabic vocabulary.

<sup>5</sup> There is no capital-letter version of the Arabic alphabet itself. In transliteration, however, capitals are commonly used for the initial letters in proper names and titles.

removing the rust from a sword; polishing a mirror; smoking out bees, in order to collect the honey; clearing the eyesight with collyrium or antimony; causing people to emigrate; clearing away anxiety." When the meaning is intransitive, the form *jalā'* is definitely correct. On balance, though short of unanimity, the classical Arabic lexicographers seem to prefer the form *jilā'* when the sense is transitive.<sup>6</sup>

As for the word *kbāṭir* (of which *kbawāṭir* is simply the plural form), it is a participial noun, derived from the root *kb-ṭ-r*, which serves as a vehicle for the basic idea of "shaking-and-stirring" or "vibration."<sup>7</sup> Many vivid impressions are "vibrantly" conjured up by the corresponding verb *kbaṭara*, for instance:

- If the subject is a camel, it tells us that the animal "raised its tail repeatedly, lashing it against its thighs." (In the case of a she-camel, this is her way of informing her mate that she is pregnant.)

- Referring to an armed warrior, it describes how he "brandished his weapon with great vigor."

- Of a person strolling along, it indicates that he "swung his arms as he walked, strutting with a proud and self-conceited gait."

- If the subject is the devil, we know that he "insinuated vain suggestions into someone's mind."

- The expression *kbaṭara bi-bālī* is a way of saying that something forgotten "bestirred itself in my mind," or that some notion or new idea "occurred to my mind."

\* In the *Utterances [Malḥūzāt]*<sup>8</sup> of Shaikh 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jilānī (may Allāh be well pleased with him), we find the expression *kbaṭara bi-qalbī*: "[something] made me uneasy." A more literal translation would be: "[something] caused a disturbing agitation in my heart, in my inner feeling."

- In the words of a Divine Saying [*Ḥadīth Qudsī*], frequently alluded to (or slightly paraphrased) in the present work, the verb *kbaṭara* is followed by the preposition *'alā*, rather than *bi-*, which gives it a different nuance. The Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) once said:

Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) has said: "I have prepared for my righteous servants that which no eye has ever seen, of which no ear has ever heard, and the very notion of which has never occurred to any human heart [*wa lā kbaṭara 'alā qalbi bashar*]."

<sup>6</sup> See: E.W. Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, art. *J-L-W*.

<sup>7</sup> See: E.W. Lane, op. cit., art. *KH-Ṭ-R*.

<sup>8</sup> See p. 101 of the edition published by Al-Baz.

This should help to account for the wide range of meaning spanned by the term *khāṭir*. At one end of the scale, in its strictly participial function, it may refer to a tail-flailing camel, a sword-waving warrior, or an arm-swinging, self-important pedestrian. In a more internal context, it may mean:

- A thought, idea or notion that occurs to the mind, seemingly at random, bestirring itself and affecting the feelings in the process.

Having gained independence as a substantive noun in its own right, rather than a mere participle, *khāṭir* has also come to signify:

- The mind itself; the memory; the feelings and frame of mind; the heart as the seat of thoughts and impressions; a person's psychological condition; the weight or importance carried by an influential individual.

One can safely say, without fear of exaggeration, that the term *khāṭir* is used dozens of times by Shaikh 'Abd al-Qādir (may Allāh be well pleased with him), not only in many of his recorded discourses, but also in the encyclopedic work he compiled himself, under the title *Sufficient Provision for Seekers of the Path of Truth [al-Ghunya li-Ṭālibī Ṭarīq al-Ḥaqq]*. In a few instances, the reference is clearly to "the feelings and frame of mind," as in the sentence:

The basic noun *ṣabr* [patience] means that no distinction is made between the state of grace and the ordeal of tribulation, and that both are experienced with equanimity [*sukūn al-khāṭir*].<sup>9</sup>

In the vast majority of these contexts, however, the meaning conveyed by *khāṭir* is covered, approximately at least, by the other definition mentioned above, namely: "a thought, idea or notion that occurs to the mind, seemingly at random, bestirring itself and affecting the feelings in the process." (For practical purposes of simplicity and consistency in translation, I have generally employed the single English word "notion," frequently paired with the bracketed transliteration of the Arabic term, thus: "notion [*khāṭir*]," or, for the plural: "notions [*khawāṭir*].") For example, in his illuminating commentary<sup>10</sup> on the words of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He):

When you recite the Qur'ān, seek refuge with Allāh from Satan the accursed.  
(16:98)

<sup>9</sup> From the subsection devoted to the virtue of patience [*ṣabr*], in the final chapter of *Sufficient Provision for Seekers of the Path of Truth [al-Ghunya li-Ṭālibī Ṭarīq al-Ḥaqq]*.

<sup>10</sup> The first of a series of Qur'ānic commentaries, contained in one of the Chapters of *Sufficient Provision for Seekers of the Path of Truth [al-Ghunya li-Ṭālibī Ṭarīq al-Ḥaqq]*.



—Shaikh ‘Abd al-Qādir (may Allāh be well pleased with him) has devoted a lengthy subsection to the rôle and modus operandi of each of six notions [*khawāṭir*], beginning with the statement:

The notions [*khawāṭir*] that may arise within the human heart are six in number, namely:

- |   |                                |
|---|--------------------------------|
| 1. The notion of the lower self         | [ <i>khāṭir an-naḥs</i> ].     |
| 2. The notion of the devil              | [ <i>khāṭir ash-shaitān</i> ]. |
| 3. The notion of the spirit             | [ <i>khāṭir ar-rūḥ</i> ].      |
| 4. The notion of the angel              | [ <i>khāṭir al-malak</i> ].    |
| 5. The notion of the rational intellect | [ <i>khāṭir al-‘aql</i> ].     |
| 6. The notion of certainty              | [ <i>khāṭir al-yaqīn</i> ].    |

Then, as we read in the Forty-fifth Discourse of the present work:<sup>11</sup>

If you reject the notion [*khāṭir*] of the lower self, the notion of the passions, the devil’s notion and the notion of this world, the notion of the hereafter will come to you. Then you will receive the angel’s notion, then finally the notion of the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He). This is the ultimate stage. When your heart is sound, it will pause to ask each notion as it arises: “What kind of notion are you? From what source do you come?” So it will say: “I am the notion of such-and-such....”

Enough has now been provided, I trust, in the way of lexicology, linguistics and quotations. Our readers have surely received a fair idea (or notion!) of what is involved in this exercise; that is to say, in the exercise of selecting one of the four versions of the title, then rendering it into sufficiently meaningful and intelligible English. Some of you may even feel moved to send your inspired suggestions to Al-Baz Publishing, Inc. Meanwhile, the volume in your hands will be entitled *The Removal of Cares* [*Jalā’ al-Khawāṭir*], rather than (to mention just a few conceivable alternatives):

- The Removal of Care [*Jalā’ al-Khāṭir*]
- Collyrium for the Heart and Mind [*Jilā’ al-Khāṭir*]
- The Expulsion of Unsettling and Unworthy Notions [*Jilā’ al-Khawāṭir*].

Let me be perfectly frank and honest, for I feel obliged to share this with you: The ultimate Al-Baz decision was prompted by the sense of good pleasure received by both parties, in the wake of a final consultation between the illustrious director-publisher and the humble translator. In bluntly straightforward terms, we “felt good”

<sup>11</sup> See p. 291 below.

about the choice of *The Removal of Cares* [*Jalā' al-Khawāṭir*] for the title of this volume. May this be an indication of approval by the spirit of the original author, and may Allāh be well pleased with him!

**Concerning the availability and condition of the Arabic text:**

First and foremost, in this regard, I wish to salute all those whose endeavors, whether recent or in the distant past, have enabled me to work on this particular translation. I truly appreciate the efforts of the scribes and copyists, despite any imperfections in their manuscripts, and I genuinely respect the scholarly collectors and librarians, despite certain elements of confusion in their cataloguing. My intention here is to clarify the situation for practical purposes, not to indulge in negative criticism and disparagement.

As for the availability of the Arabic text, we must count ourselves fortunate indeed to have succeeded in obtaining two versions, one of them essentially complete, and the other well transcribed, though only partial.<sup>12</sup> I most heartily endorse our publisher's appreciation, expressed in his Acknowledgments,<sup>13</sup> for the invaluable assistance of brother Gul Zareen Khan, who acquired a copy of the complete version in Pakistan, and for the good offices of Dr. Hars Kurio, who supplied the partial version from Berlin.

In view of the points outlined in the first section of this Translator's Introduction, it is somewhat less than astonishing to discover that *The Removal of Care(s)* [*Jalā' al-Kh(aw)āṭir*] has often been confused with *The Sublime Revelation* [*al-Faṭḥ ar-Rabbānī*].

Additional factors have undoubtedly contributed to this confusion, one of them being the application of several different titles to the latter collection, most notably the label *Sittīn Majālis* [*Sixty Discourses*]. Another is the not uncommon practice of attaching the *Malfūzāt* [*Utterances*], again under various captions, as a kind of appendix to that same volume.

It is evident that pioneering Western scholars were thrown off track, in the field of Arabic and Islamic studies, when they encountered these confusing factors. Consider, for example, the following

<sup>12</sup> By describing the one as "essentially" complete, I mean to indicate that—unlike the other—it does contain all forty-five Discourses, as well as the Appendix, whatever its imperfections in detail.

<sup>13</sup> See p. vii above.

excerpt from the major article<sup>14</sup> by the late D. S. Margoliouth, a highly erudite and influential Orientalist, in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam* :

'Abd al-Kādir's works...largely...reports of his sermons or addresses; the following are known:

2) *al-Faṭḥ al-rabbānī*, 62 sermons...with appendix. MSS. sometimes bear the title *Sittin madjālis*.

5) *Djalā' al-khāṭir* (mentioned by Ḥādjī Khālifa),<sup>15</sup> a collection of sermons of which the first bears the same date as the 59th and the last the same date as the 57th<sup>16</sup> of No. 2; perhaps it is another title for the same work.

Given the authoritative character of such a standard work of reference, it is obviously advisable to approach all similar listings with great caution. When we consulted Brockelmann,<sup>17</sup> for instance, we seemed to be well on our way, equipped with his entry:

• *Jalā' al-khāṭir* : Collection of sermons from years 545/1150 and 546/1151, some in the Madrasa, some in the Ribāt of the Sufis in Baghdad; assembled after his death. Ind. Off. 619–21, a part of it Berlin 3986. Also Ind. Off. 1246/50 under title *Sittin Majālis* (possibly in Persian).

As we already knew, most of the discourses in *al-Faṭḥ ar-Rabbānī* are recorded under the heading: "It was in the schoolhouse [*madrasa*]...", or "in the guesthouse [*ribāt*]..." Had we also already known that this information is not supplied in *Jalā'*, we could have been forewarned. At that stage, however, we took further encouragement from the Loth catalogue,<sup>18</sup> where—despite that ominous "called...*Malfūz*"—these entries seemed to confirm that IOL (India Office Library) 619–21 must indeed be the object of our quest:

• 619 "a collection of sermons..., called in this and following MSS., *Malfūz*. It seems to be identical with *Jalā' al-Khāṭir*... Well written, with all the vowels...."

• 620 another copy of the preceding. "Well written...."

• 621 "An elegant copy of the same work...."

<sup>14</sup> See n. 2 on p. 307 below.

<sup>15</sup> Ḥājī Khālifa (d. 1658 C.E.) was a secretary at the Ottoman Imperial War Department in Istanbul, where he compiled an extensive bibliography of Arabic, Persian and Turkish literature. A Latin translation of his work, by G. Flügel, was published in the 19th century (*Lexicon bibliographicum*..., 7 vols., Leipzig, 1835–58).

<sup>16</sup> The 57th Discourse of *al-Faṭḥ* is actually dated 24th Ramaḍān A.H. 545, while the date assigned to the last of *Jalā'* is 14th Ramaḍān A.H. 546—almost one year later.

<sup>17</sup> *Geschichte der arabischen Literatur (GAL)* I, p. 435 (1st ed.) / p. 562 (rev. ed., 1943).

<sup>18</sup> Otto Loth. *A catalogue of the Arabic manuscripts in the Library of the India Office*, London, 1887. (In the current India Office Library listing, Loth 619 = I.O. Islamic 2050; p. 169, Loth 620 = I.O. Islamic 1631; p. 170 and Loth 621 = I.O. Islamic 2243; p. 170.)

To cut a long story short, the Al-Baz library acquired a superb collection of MS copies—of *al-Faḥḥ ar-Rabbānī* and *Malfūẓāt*. We also obtained a copy of the item numbered Berlin 3986, from Dr. Hars Kurio at the Staatsbibliothek Preussischer Kulturbesitz in the recently reunited capital of Germany, and—believe it or not—this did prove to contain “part of it” (part of the *Jalāʾ* we were seeking). Meanwhile, to our great good fortune, brother Gul Zareen Khan had supplied us with a beautifully bound volume, published in Lahore, Pakistan....

In gold Arabic lettering on the front cover and spine, the title of the Pakistani edition reads *Jilāʾ al-Khawāṭir*,<sup>19</sup> but this is unmistakably none other than the work referred to elsewhere as *Jalāʾ al-Khāṭir*. For evidence of this, we can point to the fact that the discourses contained in the partial manuscript (Berlin 3986) are virtually identical with their counterparts in the complete (Pakistani) version. We can also cite the implications of the dates mentioned in the Prologue to the latter.

While recalling my delight at the acquisition of a complete Arabic text, I must not forget to mention that the first half of the Pakistani volume consists of an Urdu translation. My knowledge of the Urdu language is regrettably meager, to say the least. Nevertheless, since a significant portion of its vocabulary is derived from Arabic (especially the Islamic terminology) and Persian, I did attempt to make use of it from time to time. On a few occasions, when facing particularly perplexing gaps or mistranscriptions in the Arabic text, I had recourse to telephone consultation with a learned Urdu-speaking friend, Professor Mustafah Dhada, then at the University of Northern Colorado. I must commend dear brother Mustafah for his admirably patient assistance, despite his barely concealed horror at my atrocious mispronunciation of Urdu words and phrases. He certainly helped me to untie a couple of very knotty problems.

<sup>19</sup> In the elaborate Arabic calligraphy on the cover, spine and title page, the artist has inserted vowel marks and other signs. From the marks above and below the initial letter, it is possible to assume that he meant to indicate “this may be read as *Jilāʾ* or *Jalāʾ*.” (On the other hand, the mark above may be purely decorative, in which case the reading *Jilāʾ* is definitely indicated.) Where it occurs in the text itself (see p. 295 below), the word is spelled—as usual in Arabic—without any short-vowel sign: *j-lāʾ*. It is worth noting, however, that the plural form *khawāṭir*, rather than the singular *khāṭir*, is used at that same point in the text.

Under ideal circumstances, a translation like this would be based on a “definitive” version of the original text. In other words, the translator would rely on a scrupulously edited version, arrived at after meticulous comparative study of several and preferably numerous manuscripts, with special attention paid to those with the strongest claim to accuracy and authenticity. Even minor differences would be carefully noted and scrutinized for their possible significance.

In light of everything explained above, it must be perfectly evident that my translation of *The Removal of Cares* [*Jalā' al-Khawātir*] could not be based on anything resembling such a definitively established text. For the bulk of my work, I had no reference other than the text of the Pakistani edition, and—while it is thus far unique, and therefore absolutely invaluable—this did present a host of problems, some of which I shall attempt to describe in due course. As I gratefully acknowledge, however, I did enjoy these two important advantages:

1. The availability of the partial text from Berlin. This meant that I had a second version to compare, if only for approximately one twelfth of the book. To be specific, the partial text begins near the end of the 13th Discourse, and finishes near the end of the 20th Discourse.<sup>20</sup>

2. The fact that a significant number of passages, some of them quite lengthy, are also recorded in the 59th–62nd Discourses of *The Sublime Revelation* [*al-Faṭḥ ar-Rabbānī*]. For good measure, several of these passages occur in the section covered by the partial text, thereby giving me no fewer than three versions to compare.

The text of the Pakistani edition is handwritten, not set in type, and appears to have been reproduced by some kind of lithographic technique. At first glance, it seemed that reading would be unusually easy, since the shapes of the Arabic letters are large and clearly formed, and the words and lines are widely spaced (unlike those in the partial text, where little space is left unfilled). On closer inspection, alas, it became apparent that many of those clearly shaped Arabic letters did not form recognizable Arabic words.

<sup>20</sup> In the translation, the section concerned begins on p. 99 below (with the paragraph: “You must not consume....”) and ends on p. 124 (at the end of the first sentence: “This is the path....”).

In the Arabic alphabet, very few letters are uniquely shaped; most are grouped in pairs or sets, within which they are distinguished from one another by dots, placed above or below. For example, a small bump or blip may represent the letter *bā'* (provided it has a single dot beneath it), or the letter *tā'* (with two dots above), or *thā'* (three dots above), or *nūn* (one dot above), or *yāy* (two dots below). Three short prongs form the shape that represents a pair of letters: *sīn* (with no dots above or below) or *shīn* (with three dots above).

The occasional omission or misplacement of a dot is only to be expected, in almost every written or printed text of any length, and a single dot can easily be doubled or tripled by an accidental ink smudge. When a manuscript is microfilmed, and the photocopy subsequently enlarged, additional spots or flecks may insert themselves, sometimes posing as intended dots. This may cause the reader to blink for an instant, but the effect is seldom serious enough to alter the meaning of an entire sentence, or to make it unintelligible. The context usually corrects the error, often before the mistake is even noticed.

Even in the Pakistani text, where dot-misplacement is far from merely occasional, the context often comes to the rescue. Probably the most striking instance occurs in the Fourth Discourse, where two consecutive words are distinctly written as *kull* [every] and *shai'* [thing]. If the sentence ended there, it could only be translated: "He will hear the call of every thing." The sentence continues, however, with words meaning: "and Messenger and saint and champion of the truth."<sup>21</sup> It should obviously read: "He will hear the call of every Prophet [*nabī*] and Messenger...." In English, the word "thing" would be an incredible misspelling or misprint of the word "Prophet." In Arabic, on the other hand, it takes only a shifting of dots (plus a very slight adjustment in the basic letter-shapes) to convert *nabī* into *shai'*, or to reinstate the former.

For scholarly purposes, it would of course be desirable to provide a detailed list of all such textual problems, with particular emphasis on those that proved most vexing to the translator. Since this is beyond the scope of the present edition of *The Removal of Cares* [*Jalā' al-Khawāṭir*], let me confine myself to describing one more riddle—and its merciful solution!

<sup>21</sup> See p. 40 below (top of the page). In the Pakistani edition, see pt. 2, p. 35, line 7.

Toward the middle of the Twentieth Discourse,<sup>22</sup> in distinctly shaped letters and well-formed words, the Pakistani text presented me with the apparent sentence: *qul ad-dunyā qurb lā qurb al-janna*. Stretching my head as I did so, I ventured the provisional translation: “Speak of this world as a nearness, not of the nearness of the Garden of Paradise.” Then, a few lines further down the page, I encountered the words: *jā’at ad-dunyā*... Given the contextual syntax, they could only mean: “this world will come...” I knew that *ad-dunyā* had once appeared as an obvious misspelling of *ad-dīnār*,<sup>23</sup> but “the gold coin will come”? No, it simply failed to pass the assayer’s test.

Let me refrain from sharing all the agonies I suffered, as I struggled to make good sense of these passages. Suffice it to say that I was far from satisfied with my first rendition of the Twentieth Discourse. If I am reasonably content with the version offered in this volume, my contentment may be regarded as a tribute to the partial text from Berlin. As soon as I had access to the latter, I discovered numerous different readings.

Some of these were extremely helpful, notably: *qabl ad-dunya* [before this world], instead of *qul ad-dunya* [say, this world...], and *jā’at al-janna* [the Garden of Paradise will come], instead of *jā’at ad-dunya* [this world will come]. Surely a good note on which to conclude this section!

### **A short bibliographical list of certain indispensable companions:**

In the course of preparing this translation of *The Removal of Cares* [*Jalā’ al-Khawāṭir*], and the many explanatory notes appended, I have consulted numerous works of reference. The following have been constantly close by my side, and frequently open on the desk before my inquiring eyes:

- *The Glorious Qur’ān*. Translation and Commentary by Abdullah Yusuf Ali. Leicester, England: The Islamic Foundation, 1975.
- *The Glorious Koran*. English translation by Muhammad Marmaduke Pickthall. London: George Allen and Unwin, 1980.

<sup>22</sup> See p. 123 below. In the Pakistani edition, see pt. 2, p. 136, lines 4 and 5.

<sup>23</sup> Near the beginning of the Nineteenth Discourse, p. 118 below. In the Pakistani edition, pt. 2, p. 130, line 4, the word spelled *ad-dunyā* [this world] is immediately followed by *wa’d-dirham* [and the silver coin].

- Arthur J. Arberry. *The Koran Interpreted*. London: Oxford University Press, 1964.
- William A. Graham. *Divine Word and Prophetic Word in Early Islam*. The Hague and Paris: Mouton, 1977.
- Thomas Patrick Hughes. *Dictionary of Islam*. Lahore, Pakistan: The Book House, 1964.
- E.W. Lane. *Arabic-English Lexicon*. 2 vols. Cambridge, England: Islamic Texts Society Trust, 1984.
- *Shorter Encyclopaedia of Islam (SEI)*. Leiden, Netherlands: E.J. Brill, 1961.

**A concluding supplication:**

In the Name of Allāh, the All-Merciful and All-Compassionate, I pray that our readers may experience the removal of any serious cares that trouble and distress them. May they receive the blessing of peace from the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He). *Āmīn*.

**Muhtar Holland**

December 24th, 1996





The  
Removal of Cares  
[Ḥalā' Al-Khawāṭir]



بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

*It is from Solomon, and it is: “In the Name of  
Allāh, the Beneficent, the Merciful....”  
(Qur’ān 27:30)*



## Prologue

In the Name of Allāh, All-Merciful and Compassionate!

**P**raise be to Allāh, the Lord of All the Worlds, and may Allāh bestow blessings and peace upon our Master Muḥammad and his family and his companions.

The following discourses were delivered by the Shaikh, the Imām, the most learned scholar, the pious abstainer, the dutiful worshipper, the knower by direct experience, the avoider of excess, the Shaikh of shaikhs, the proof of Islām [*hujjat al-Islām*], the axis of the human race [*quṭb al-anām*], the upholder of the Sunna, the suppressor of heretical innovation, the crown of those who know by direct experience, the love of those who tread the spiritual path, the pillar of the Sharīʿa [the Law of Islām], the mainstay of the Ḥaqīqa [the Experience of Reality] and the signpost of the Ṭarīqa [the Spiritual Path], the chief of the saints, the leader of the pure, the lantern of those who travel the spiritual way, the guide, the captain of those who are devoted to their duty, the lamp of the people of devotion and purity, Shaikh Muḥyiʿd-Dīn Abū Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Qādir, son of Abū Ṣāliḥ Mūsā al-Jīlī the grandson of ʿAbduʿllāh the Hermit. May Allāh sanctify his spirit and illuminate his mausoleum. May He gather us at the Resurrection as members of his company, and may He grant that we die in the embrace of his affection. May He allow us to enjoy the benefit of his blessed grace and of his spoken words, both in this world and in the hereafter. And may Allāh bless our Master Muḥammad and his family and his companions, each and every one of them, and may He grant them peace in great abundance. And praise be to Allāh, Lord of All the Worlds.

The first of these discourses [*majālis*] was delivered on a Friday, the 9th day of the month of Rajab, and the last of them was delivered on the 14th day of the blessed month of Ramaḍān, in the year [A.H.] 546.



## The First Discourse<sup>1</sup>

[The Shaikh (may Allāh be well pleased with him) said:]

**B**eware of envy [*ḥasad*], for it is a bad companion indeed. It was envy that wrecked the house of Iblīs, that ruined him, that made him one of the people of the Fire of Hell, and that caused him to be damned by the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He) and by His Angels and His Prophets and all His creatures. How could any sensible person indulge in feelings of envy, when he has heard the words of Allāh (Exalted is He):

We have shared out among them their livelihood in the life of this world. (43:32)<sup>2</sup> Or are they envious of the people because of that which Allāh has bestowed upon them of His bounty? (4:54)<sup>3</sup>

He must also have heard the saying of the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace):

Envy consumes the merit earned by good deeds, just as the fire consumes the logs of wood.

O young man! As one of the learned scholars has said: “By Allāh, once a person is filled with envy he may go so far as to murder his friend.” Let us take refuge with Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) from the person who is filled with envy, for he is always involved in some dispute with Him, about His work, about His creatures and about His allotment of shares.

I speak to you as one who is not interested in what you have in your houses, in your goods, your property and your gifts. As long as I carry

<sup>1</sup> The passages printed in ordinary (non-bold) Jilani font are also to be found—with only minor differences almost entirely explicable as due to mistakes by the copyist of *Jalā' al-Khawāṭir*—in the Fifty-ninth Discourse of Shaikh 'Abd al-Qādir's work *The Sublime Revelation [al-Faṭḥ ar-Rabbānī]*. (See pp. 395–99 of the translation published by Al-Baz.)

<sup>2</sup> *Naḥnu qasamnā bainabum mā'ishatabum fi 'l-ḥayāti 'd-dunyā.*

<sup>3</sup> *am yaḥsudūna 'n-nāsa 'alā mā ātābumu 'llāhu min faḍlib.*



on like this, you will benefit from what I have to tell you, if Allāh (Exalted is He) so wills. As long as the speaker has his eye on your turbans, your robes and your pockets, you will derive no benefit from what he has to say. As long as he is watching your smoke [i.e., your outward appearance] and harboring greedily ambitious expectations of you, you will derive no benefit from what he has to say. His speech will be an empty shell with no kernel [*lubb*] inside it, a bone with no meat on it, a bitter pill with nothing to sweeten it, an outer form with no inner content. The speech of one who is greedy with ambition is not free from confusion and dissimulation. He is incapable of presenting the truth. His speech is an empty shell with no kernel [*lubb*] inside it, just outer form with no inner content. One who is greedily ambitious [*tāmi'*] is empty like greedy ambition [*tama'*] itself, because all the consonant letters in [the Arabic word] *tama'* are empty—the *ṭā'*, the *mīm* and the *'ain* [all have a hollow shape as they are written in the Arabic script].<sup>4</sup>

O servants of Allāh, you must speak the truth, for only then will you achieve success. The honest person [*ṣādiq*] does not go back on his word. Someone who is honest in affirming the Oneness [*tawḥīd*] of Allāh (Exalted is He) will never stoop to saying what his lower self [*nafs*]<sup>5</sup>—in other words, his devil [*shaiṭān*]<sup>6</sup>—would have him say. The honest person does not listen to foolish prattle, which cannot find its way into his ear. If someone is telling the truth when he claims to love Allāh (Exalted is He) and His Messenger and the righteous among His servants, that person will never stoop to speaking like a despicable and helpless hypocrite [*munāfiq*]. The honest person is well aware [of what is true and what is false], while the liar does not know [the difference]. The aspiration of the truthful person [*ṣādiq*] rises sky-high. He is not badly affected by anything anyone may say. Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) is in control of his affairs. If He wants you for some business, He will make you ready for it.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> See *The Sublime Revelation [al-Faṭḥ ar-Rabbānī]*, first paragraph of the Fifty-ninth Discourse.

<sup>5</sup> At this point in the Fifty-ninth Discourse of *The Sublime Revelation [al-Faṭḥ ar-Rabbānī]*, we also find the following words of the Shaikh (may Allāh be well pleased with him):

Something that was said arose from bad manners, and this is the response to it. The honesty [*ṣidq*] of your spiritual states will induce me to speak, while your dishonesty will make me fall silent. To the extent that you will buy, I am selling.

O young man! If you were in possession of the fruit of knowledge [*‘ilm*] and its blessed grace [*baraka*], you would not go running to the doors of potentates [*salāṭīn*] in order to indulge your lower self [*nafs*] and its desires. The learned person [*‘ālim*] has no legs on which to run to the doors of creatures. The abstinent person [*zābid*] has no hands with which to take people’s goods. The lover [*muḥibb*] of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) has no eyes with which to look at any other than Him. Even if he were to meet all the creatures there are, the lover who is sincere [*ṣādiq*] in his love would take no pleasure in looking at them. He looks at no one but his Beloved [*maḥbūb*]. This world does not seem important to the eyes in his head, the hereafter does not seem important to the eyes of his heart, and to the eyes of his innermost being [*sirr*] nothing seems important but the Master [*Mawlā*].

**O young man!** Be sensible! You are getting nowhere. Most of you will follow anyone who makes a noise or clamor. What most speakers have to say comes from their tongues, not from their hearts. The noises made by the hypocrite [*munāfiq*] come from his tongue and his head, while the noises made by the honest person come from his heart and his innermost being [*sirr*]. His heart is at the door of his Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He), while his innermost being is entering His presence. He goes on shouting at the door until he enters the house. You are a liar, by Allāh, under all circumstances! You do not recognize the path to the door of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), so how can you point it out? You are blind, so how can you guide others? You have been blinded by your passions [*hawā*] and your natural inclinations [*ṭab’*], by following your lower self [*nafs*] and by your love of this world, your prominent position and your desires.

**Woe unto you!** You would dearly love to remain in this world forever, but nothing will fall into your hands until such time as you put the ritual prayer [*ṣalāt*] before the business of your shop; until such time as you put the hereafter before your worldly interests; until such time as you put the Creator [*Khāliq*] before His creatures [*khalq*]; until such time as you put the beggar before yourself; until such time as you give priority to carrying out the commandments of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), to observing His prohibitions, and to enduring with patience the misfortunes that come from Him, instead of to your passionate desires [*hawā*]

and your habitual patterns of behavior [*‘ādāt*]; until such time as you put your response to Him ahead of your response to His creatures.

Be sensible! You are immersed in a futile fantasy, devoid of truth both outwardly and inwardly. You are involved in a public show with **no private life**. Come closer to me, while sins of disobedience [*ma’āṣī*] are still on your outer being [*zāhir*], before they reach your heart and so become persistent. That persistence will then go further and develop into unbelief [*kufī*].

Take care of what little you have, and the greater amount will catch up with you. To quote the words of the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace):

The repentant sinner is like someone who has never committed a sin, even if he repeats [the process of sinning and repenting] seventy times in the course of the day.

If you heed the advice of the Messenger, put his words into practice, and cultivate a good relationship with him by following in the footsteps of his Companions, you will cause your heart to move closer to your Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He) and hear His speech. Once a person is confirmed in his obedience and his servitude [*‘ubūdiyya*] to Allāh, it becomes possible for him to hear His speech.

Our Master Moses (blessing and peace be upon him, as upon our own Prophet and all the other Prophets) came to his people bearing the Torah, in which the [Divine] commandments and prohibitions were recorded. But they said to him: “We shall not accept this from you until we behold the face of Allāh and hear His speech!” So Moses told them: “He has not let me see His face, so why would He let you see it?” Then they said to him: “If you will not show us His face, and if you will not let us hear His speech, we shall not accept His word.” At this point Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) conveyed [*awḥā*] to Moses (peace be upon him) by way of inspiration: “Tell them that, if they wish to hear My speech, they must fast for three days. When the fourth day comes, they must purify themselves and dress in clean clothes. Then bring them with you so that they may hear My speech.” Moses informed them of this and they acted accordingly. Then they came to the place on the mountain where Moses was accustomed to conversing with his Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He). Out of all his people he had selected seventy men from among their learned scholars and pious ascetics.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> See next page.

So the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He) addressed them and they were all thunderstruck, while Moses (peace be upon him) alone remained conscious. When Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) revived them, they said: “We have no capacity for hearing the speech of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), so you must be the mediator between us and Him.” Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) then spoke to Moses (peace be upon him), while he recited to them and repeated His words to them. He was capable of hearing His speech only because of the strength of his faith [*īmān*] and the realization [*taḥqīq*] of his obedience and his servitude, while they were incapable of paying attention to him because of the weakness of their faith. If they had accepted from him what he brought them in the Torah, obeyed him in respect of the [divine] commandments and prohibitions, learned to behave properly and not been so hasty in what they said, they would have been able to hear the speech of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He).

**You must strive with all your might in obedience to your Master [*Mawlā*]. You must make every effort to give to those who withhold from you, to connect with those who cut you off, and to pardon those who do you wrong. You must make every effort to ensure that, while your eye is with the servants of the Lord, your heart is with the Lord of the servants. You must make every effort to ensure that you always tell the truth and never tell a lie. You must make every effort to ensure that you are always sincere and never hypocritical.**

Luqmān the Wise (may Allāh bestow His mercy upon him) would often say to his son: “O my dear son, do not put on a show to impress other people. Alas for you, if you should meet Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) while your heart is unworthy!”

**Do not be a two-faced, two-tongued person with two types of behavior, one for relating to so-and-so and another for relating to somebody else. I can assure you that I have been given the authority to deal with every lying hypocrite [*munāfiq*] and impostor [*dajjāl*]. I have been empowered to deal with everyone who is guilty of disobedience to Allāh (Almighty**

<sup>6</sup> This part of the story of Moses (peace be upon him) and the seventy chosen men is reported at length here in *Jalā' al-Khawāṭir*, but not so in the Fifty-ninth Discourse of *The Sublime Revelation [al-Faṭḥ ar-Rabbānī]*, where we are merely told that the Shaikh (may Allāh be well pleased with him) “mentioned the seventy who were chosen from the people of Moses (peace be upon him) to hear the speech [of the Lord]....”

and Glorious is He), the most important of these being Iblīs and the least significant being the ordinary sinner [*fāsiq*].<sup>7</sup> I am at war with you and with everyone who goes astray [*dāll*], who leads others astray [*mudill*], and who tries to persuade other people that what is false is true. For help in this struggle I invoke [the words of the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace)]:

There is no power and no strength except through Allāh, the High, the Almighty [*lā ḥawla wa-lā quwwata illā bi'llāhi 'l-'Alīyyi 'l-'Azīm*].

Hypocrisy [*nifāq*] has already settled firmly on your heart. You need to surrender your self-will [*islām*], to repent, and to cut the rope that binds you to unbelief [*qaṭ' az-zunnār*].<sup>8</sup> Be sensible! You will see clearly once the dust has cleared from your eyes.

And you shall surely know its tiding [i.e., the truth of the matter] after a while. (38:88)<sup>9</sup>

If anyone hears what I have to say, puts it into practice and does so sincerely, he will come to be one of those who are drawn near [to the Lord], because it is the speech of an inner kernel [*lubb*], containing no outer shell.

Woe unto you! You claim to love Allāh, yet with your hearts you devote yourselves to others. Because Majnūn was truly sincere in his love for Laylā, his heart would never even notice anyone other than Laylā. He came across some people one day and they asked him: “Where are you coming from?” “From being with Laylā,” said he. Then they asked him: “Where do you intend to go now?” “To Laylā,” he replied.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>7</sup> The term *fāsiq* may also be translated as “an immoral person” or, more technically, as “one who falls short of the legal standard of rectitude under Islamic law.”

<sup>8</sup> The *zunnār*, a kind of girdle or waistband traditionally worn by non-Muslims (especially Christians) was often used by Islamic authors as a symbol of imperfect faith. In the Forty-third Discourse of *The Sublime Revelation [al-Faṭḥ ar-Rabbānī]*, Shaikh 'Abd al-Qādir (may Allāh be well pleased with him) says:

There is nothing to be said until you cut the waistband [*zunnār*], renew your Islām, truly repent with your heart, and leave the house of your natural urges [*ṭab*], your passions [*ḥawā*], your existence [*wujūd*], and your efforts to attract benefit to you and repel harm from you.

<sup>9</sup> *wa la-tālamunna naba'abu bā'da ḥīn*.

<sup>10</sup> In the Forty-first Discourse of *The Sublime Revelation [al-Faṭḥ ar-Rabbānī]* Shaikh 'Abd al-Qādir (may Allāh be well pleased with him) has given us this beautiful version of the story of Majnūn and his love for Laylā:

Your Beloved will expel from your heart all creatures between the heavenly Throne and the surface of the earth, so you will love neither this world nor the hereafter. You will be estranged from you, and feel at home with Him. You will come to resemble Laylā's Majnūn,

When the heart is truly sincere in its love for Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), it comes to be like Moses (blessing and peace be upon him, as upon our own Prophet and all the other Prophets), in that Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) said concerning him:

And we had forbidden foster-mothers to him before then. (28:12)<sup>11</sup>

You must not lie, for you do not have two hearts; no, it is one single heart, and when it is filled with one thing it cannot contain something else. As Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) has said:

Allāh has not assigned to any man two hearts within his body. (33:4)<sup>12</sup>

A heart that loves both the Creator and creatures is unsound. A heart that contains both this world and the hereafter is unsound....<sup>13</sup> One who is in ignorance of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) may put on a show and act hypocritically, but one who has knowledge of Him [*‘ālim bihi*] will not behave like this. The stupid fool may disobey Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), but the intelligent person will obey Him. **One who is filled with hatred may disobey Him, but the lover will always obey Him.** One who is eager to amass worldly things may put on a show and behave hypocritically, but one who has few expectations will not act in this fashion. **One who is forgetful of death may put on a show, but one who remembers will not be guilty of pretentious behavior. One who is**

who was so obsessed with love for her that he shunned his fellow creatures and preferred to live in isolation, having only the wild animals for company. He left civilization behind and preferred to be in desolate places. He moved away from the praise and blame of people. Their speech and their silence became one and the same to him; it was all the same to him whether they viewed him with favor or with displeasure. One day he was asked: “Who are you?” “Laylā,” said he. He was blind to everything apart from her, and deaf to hearing any speech but hers. He would not give her up because of any kind of criticism.

<sup>11</sup> *wa ḥarramnā ‘alaibi ‘l-marāḍi ‘a min qablu*. In the Sixty-second Discourse of *The Sublime Revelation [al-Faṭḥ ar-Rabbānī]* Shaikh ‘Abd al-Qādir (may Allāh be well pleased with him) has provided the following commentary on this verse [*āya*] of the Qur’ān:

Forbidden to the heart of this sincere lover [*muḥibb ṣādiq*] is the foster mother of every created fabrication [*muḥḍath makhlūq*] that is after it was not. The milk of all foster mothers will be dried up in his throat because of divine jealousy [*ghaira ilābiyya*]. It all gets dried up. Everything is removed from his heart, so that he cannot be attached to anything apart from his Beloved.

<sup>12</sup> *mā ja’ala ‘llābu li-rajulin min qalbaini fī jawfih*.

<sup>13</sup> At this point in the text of the Fifty-ninth Discourse of *The Sublime Revelation [al-Faṭḥ ar-Rabbānī]* we find the words:

If the heart belongs to the Creator and the face is turned toward creatures, this is permissible. It is permissible to direct one’s attention toward creatures in order to look after their best interests out of compassion for them.

**absent-minded may put on a show, but one who is wide awake will not behave pretentiously.** The saints [*awliyā'*] of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) have an awakener to awaken them and a teacher to teach them. The Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He) equips them with the means to acquire knowledge. As the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) has said:

Even if the believer [*mu'min*] were to be on a mountain peak, Allāh would provide him with a teacher to teach him.

Do not borrow the words of the righteous [*ṣāliḥūn*] and then utter them pretending that they are your own! The borrowing will not be concealed. You must clothe yourself from what belongs to you, not from something borrowed. Plant the cotton with your own hand, water it with your own hand and cultivate it with your own effort, then weave it, sew it and wear it. Do not be happy with someone else's property and someone else's clothes. If you take another person's words and utter them, pretending they are your own, the hearts of the righteous will despise you. If you have no deed to show for yourself, you have nothing to say. The crux of the whole matter is actual practice [*'amal*]. As Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) has said:

Enter the Garden [of Paradise] because of what you used to do. (16:32)<sup>14</sup>

**O young man! Do not weary the angels with so much talk about mere fantasy and matters of no substance. The heart [of the true believer] must rather feel afraid of the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He), for the limbs and organs of his body will certainly be afraid of Him [at the Resurrection]. His tongue will be dumb and his heart will be frozen in awe of Him, so his limbs and organs will surely be frozen too. You must put the angels at their ease and refrain from your idle talk, otherwise your sins will be piled up one on top of another, with no clear end in sight. If you go on talking without being conscious of what you are saying, you cannot know whether your words will be counted in your favor or against you. You must be consciously aware of death. There is no way for you to escape from your death. You must give up your habit of indulging in gossip and paying attention to things that do not concern you. You must curtail your expectations and reduce your greedy ambition, for you will**

<sup>14</sup> *udkbulu 'l-jannata bi-mā kuntum tā'malūn.*

very soon be dead. Your death may come while you are sitting right here. It may come while you are standing up. You may be carried back to your house on a bier.

The true believer [*mu' min*] takes his own lower self [*nafs*] to task. When it is affected by pain and suffering, he says to it: "I gave you sound advice and you took no notice of the advice I gave you. I gave you plenty of warning! O ignorant one, O unbeliever [*kāfira*], O enemy of Allāh!" If a person does not act as a preacher to his own lower self, he will never derive any benefit from the advice of any other preacher. If a person wishes to attain salvation [*falāḥ*], he needs to give stern advice to his own lower self. He must teach it to practice abstinence and engage in constant struggle with it. To practice abstinence [*zuhd*] means giving up those things that are strictly unlawful [*muḥarramāt*], then giving up those things that are merely dubious [*shubuhāt*], then giving up those things that are indifferently permissible [*mubāḥāt*], and eventually giving up even those things that are absolutely lawful [*ḥalāl mutlaq*], under all circumstances, until there is nothing at all left to be given up. The real meaning [*ḥaqīqa*] of abstinence is giving up this world, giving up the hereafter, giving up all carnal appetites and pleasures, giving up one's very existence [*wujūd*], giving up the quest for spiritual states [*aḥwāl*] and degrees [*darajāt*], for charismatic powers [*karāmāt*] and spiritual stations [*maqāmat*], as well as everything else apart from the Lord of lords [*Rabb al-arbāb*], until nothing remains but the Creator [*Khāliq*] (Almighty and Glorious is He), the One who is the ultimate destination and the final goal of all our hopes, the One whom all things come home at last.<sup>15</sup>

Among the Islamic theologians [*mutakallimūn*] there are some who prefer to speak of the believer's heart [*qalb*], and there are those who prefer to discuss his innermost being [*sirr*], his lower self [*nafs*], his passionate desires [*hawā*], his devil [*shaitān*], or his habitual behavior [*'ada*]. The believer [*mu' min*] ponders carefully, then he speaks. The

<sup>15</sup> An allusion to the words of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) in the Qur'ānic verse [*āya*]:

The path of Allāh, unto Whom belongs whatsoever is in the heaven and whatsoever is in the earth. Do not all things come home to Allāh at last? [*a-lā ila 'llāhi taṣīru 'l-umūr*]. (42:53)



hypocrite [*munāfiq*] speaks, then ponders after he has spoken. The believer's tongue takes second place to his understanding, while the hypocrite's tongue runs ahead of his mind and his heart.

O Allāh, include us among the true believers, and do not include us among the hypocrites!

Give us in this world good, and good in the hereafter, and guard us against the torment of the fire! (2:201)<sup>16</sup>



<sup>16</sup> *ātina fi 'd-dunyā ḥasanatan wa fi 'l-ākhirati ḥasanatan wa qinā 'adbāba 'n-nār.*

## The Second Discourse<sup>17</sup>

**W**hen the heart acts in accordance with the Book [of Allāh] and the Sunna [of the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace)], it draws close [to the Lord], and when it has drawn close it acquires knowledge. It can now discern what rightfully belongs to it and what is required of it, what belongs to Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) and what belongs to others apart from Him, what belongs to the Truth [*Ḥaqq*] and what belongs to falsehood [*bāṭil*]. Since the believer [*mu'min*] is endowed with a light by which he can see, how could it not be so in the case of the champion of truth who is drawn near [*aṣ-ṣiddīq al-muqarrab*]?

The believer has a light by which he can see, and this is why the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) has warned us to beware of his gaze, for he said:

Beware of the penetrating insight [*firāsa*] of the believer, for he sees by the light of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He).

The knower [*ʿārif*] brought near [to Allāh] is also given a light by which he can see how near he is to his Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He), and can see the nearness of his Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He) to his heart. He can see the spirits [*arwāḥ*] of the angels [*malā'ika*] and the Prophets [*nabiyyūn*], and the hearts and spirits of the champions of truth [*ṣiddīqūn*]. He can see their spiritual states [*aḥwāl*] and stations [*maqāmāt*]. All of this is in the deepest folds of his heart [*suwaidā' qalbihi*] and the pure clarity [*ṣafā'*] of his innermost being [*sirr*]. He is always in blissful happiness with his Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He). He is a mediator, receiving from Him and distributing to the people.

<sup>17</sup> The passages printed in ordinary (non-bold) Jilani font are also to be found—with only minor differences almost entirely explicable as due to mistakes by the copyist of *Jalā' al-Khawāṭir*—in the Fifty-ninth Discourse of Shaikh 'Abd al-Qādir's work *The Sublime Revelation [al-Faṭḥ ar-Rabbānī]*. (See pp. 400–404 of the translation published by Al-Baz.)

There are those who are erudite [*'alīm*] with both tongue and heart, while some are erudite at heart but clumsy with the tongue. As for the hypocrite, he is clever with the tongue but incoherent at heart. All his erudition is in his tongue, and this is why the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) has said:

What I fear most of all for my Community [*umma*] is a hypocrite with a clever tongue.

O young man! When you come into my presence, you must wrap up your personal activity and your selfish concerns. You must come in with nothing, as one who is utterly bankrupt [*mufliṣ*]. If you come here while you are still thinking about your work and your self-interest, you will be blocked from receiving this guidance that I am trying to convey. Woe unto you! You hate me because I am telling the truth and making you face up to the truth [*uḥāqiquka*]. No one hates me except the enemy of Allāh, and no one ignores me unless he is ignorant of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), given to lots of talk and little action. No one loves me unless he is well aware of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), given to plenty of action and little talk. The sincere person [*mukhlis*] loves me and the hypocrite [*munāfiq*] hates me. I am loved by the *Sunnī* [the faithful follower of the Sunna of the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace)] and I am hated by the *bid'ī* [the type who prefers to follow heretical innovations]. If you love me, the benefit of all of this will accrue to you, but if you hate me, the effect it has on you will be detrimental. I am not caught up with the praise and blame of my fellow creatures. There is not one member of any species on the face of the earth of whom I am afraid or on whom I pin my hopes, be it one of the jinn or a member of the human race, be it animal or insect or any other kind of creature. I am afraid of none but Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He). The more He grants me His blessed favor, the greater my fear becomes, because He is:

Doer of what He will. (11:107)<sup>18</sup> — He shall not be questioned as to what He does, but they shall be questioned. (21:23)<sup>19</sup>

O young man! Do not concentrate on washing the clothes of your physical body, while the clothes of your heart are getting dirty. You are in a filthy state. You must wash the heart first, then wash the ordinary

<sup>18</sup> *Fa' alun li-mā yurīd.*

<sup>19</sup> *lā yus'alu 'ammā yaf'alu wa hum yus'alūn.*

**clothes. You must perform both acts of washing, both acts of purification. Wash your clothes clean of dirt, and wash your heart clean of sins.**

You must not let yourself be dazzled by anything, for your Lord is “Doer of what He will” (11:107). This is why the story is told about a certain righteous man and how he once paid a visit to his brother in Allāh (Exalted is He). “O my brother,” he said to him, “come, let us weep over Allāh’s foreknowledge [*‘ilm*] about us!” How excellent is the saying of this righteous man [*ṣāliḥ*]! He was one who had experience [*‘arīf*] of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) and who had heard the words of the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace):

One of you may act in accordance with the practice of the people of the Garden of Paradise, until nothing remains between him and it but the distance of a cubit or a span, then misfortune overtakes him and he becomes one of the people of the Fire of Hell. And one of you may act in accordance with the practice of the people of the Fire, until nothing remains between him and it but a cubit or a span, then good fortune befalls him and he becomes one of the people of the Garden.

Allāh’s foreknowledge about you will only become apparent to you when you turn again to Him with all your heart and all your aspiration, when you never move away from the door of His mercy, when you set up a barrier of iron between your heart and the lusts of the flesh, and when you make death and the grave the focus of attention for the eyes of your head and your heart. You must be ever on the watch to observe the signs of favor directed toward you by the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He), His awareness of you and His presence near you. You must be satisfied with poverty, content with bankruptcy [*iflās*], and happy with very little, while always keeping within the proper bounds; in others words, always obeying the commandments and observing the prohibitions [of the sacred law], and bearing with patience whatever is meted out to you by destiny [*qadar*]. If you make this your constant practice, your heart will meet your Lord and you will enter His presence with your innermost being [*sirr*]. Then, when all things are revealed, you will see with the eye of certainty [*yaqīn*]. You will experience the kind of perception referred to by the Commander of the Believers [*Amīr al-Mu’minīn*], ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (may Allāh be well pleased with him and may He ennoble his countenance), when he said: “Even if the veil were to be lifted, my certainty could not become any greater.” When they

**asked him: “Have you ever seen your Lord?” he replied: “I am not one to worship a Lord whom I have never seen.”<sup>20</sup>**

A certain righteous man was asked: “Have you seen your Lord?” He replied: “If I had not seen Him, I would be at my wit’s end.” If someone should say: “How can you see Him?” I would say: “When creatures have departed from the servant’s heart and nothing is left in it apart from the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He), He will let him see and draw him as close as He will. He will let him see inwardly [*bāṭinan*], as He lets others see outwardly [*ẓāhiran*]. He will let him see as He showed Himself to our Prophet Muḥammad (Allāh bless him and give him peace) on the Night of the Heavenly Ascension [*mi’rāj*], just as He shows Himself to this servant, draws him near and talks to him in his sleep. Sometimes his heart will tell him in a moment of wakefulness to close the eyes of his physical being, so he sees Him with his inner eyes, just as he is accustomed to seeing things on the outside [*ẓāhir*]. He gives him a different inner content [*ma’nā*], so he can see Him with it; he sees His nearness; he sees His attributes [*ṣifāt*]; he sees His miracles [*karāmāt*], His grace and beneficence and kindness toward him; he sees His bountiful goodness and His protecting wing.”

When a person’s servitude [*‘ubūdiyya*] and direct experience [*ma’rifā*] are fully realized, he will say neither “Let me see” nor “Do not let me see”; neither “Give me” nor “Do not give me.” He becomes nonexistent [*fānī*], wholly absorbed [*mustaghbir*]. This is why one of those who have attained to this station [*maqām*] says: “What do I care about me?” Well spoken indeed! I am His slave [*‘abd*], and the slave in His master’s company has neither choice nor will of his own.

A man once bought a slave [*mamlūk*], and that slave happened to be one of the people of religion [*dīn*] and righteousness [*ṣalāḥ*].

“O slave,” the man said to him, “what would you like to eat?”

“Whatever you give me to eat.”

“What kind of clothes would you like to wear?”

“Whatever you give me to wear.”

“Where would you like to lodge in my house?”

“In whatever place you lodge me.”

“What jobs would you prefer to work at?”

“Whatever you order me to do.”

<sup>20</sup> This famous saying of Imām ‘Alī (may Allāh ennoble his countenance) is also cited in the Fifty-fourth Discourse of *The Sublime Revelation [al-Faṭḥ ar-Rabbānī]*, where Shaikh ‘Abd al-Qādir (may Allāh be well pleased with him) adds that he also said: “My heart has let me see my Lord.” (See p. 362 of the translation published by Al-Baz.)

The man then burst into tears, as he said: “What a blessing it would be for me, if I could be with my Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He) as you are with me!”

“O my master,” said the slave, “does the servant [*‘abd*] in the company of his master [*sayyid*]/have any will [*irāda*]/or choice [*ikhtiyār*] of his own?”

Then the master said to him: “You are a free man [*ḥurr*] for the sake of Allāh, and I would like you to stay with me, so that I may serve you with my person [*naḥs*] and my property.”

Anyone who really knows [*‘arafa*] Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) is left with no will or choice of his own, and he says: “What do I care about me?” You must not challenge destiny [*qadar*] concerning his affairs or the affairs of any other.

**Listen to me, O you protesters, O you objectors, O you who behave with such bad manners! Pay attention to me, for I am speaking as one of the advertising agents of the community of the Prophets [*munādī ummat al-anbiyā’*], as one of their servants [*atbā’*] and as one of their brokers [*samāsīr*].<sup>21</sup> I base my judgment on the Book and the Sunna, then no one whose heart has been drawn close to Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) can have anything to fear from what I say.**

Among the servants of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) there are a few individuals who abstain from the company of creatures and find intimate friendship in places of seclusion [*khalawāt*]. They enjoy such intimacy in reading the Qur’ān and in reading the words of the Messenger (Allāh bless him and give him peace), so they surely come to have hearts that are very familiar with creatures and close to them, and with which they see their own lower selves [*nufūs*] and the lower selves of other people. Their hearts are sound, so nothing of what you are up to is concealed from them. They can speak about what you are thinking and feeling, and they can tell you about your domestic situations.

Woe unto you! Be sensible! Do not try to compete with the people [of the Lord] in your ignorance. After you have emerged from [the study of]

<sup>21</sup> It is interesting to note that Shaikh ‘Abd al-Qādir (may Allāh be well pleased with him) has used these same commercial similes in the Fourteenth Discourse of *The Sublime Revelation [al-Faṭḥ ar-Rabbānī]* (p. 108 of the translation published by Al-Baz), where he says:

O you who are too preoccupied with your livelihoods to give me your attention! The [true] livelihood is with me. The profits are with me. The goods of the hereafter are with me. I am sometimes an advertising agent [*munāḍin*], at other times a broker [*simsār*], and the owner of the goods at yet another time. I give everything its due.

the Book, you will get up and speak to the people. **After the blackness of the ink has rubbed off onto your clothes and your body, and after careful reflection, you will speak to the people.** This is a matter that requires proficiency of the outer [*ẓāhir*] and proficiency of the inner [*bāṭin*], then freedom from all attachment.<sup>22</sup>

O you who are so heedless of what is required of you, remember both the particular resurrection [*al-qiyāmat al-khāṣṣa*] and the General Resurrection [*al-qiyāmat al-ʿamma*]. The particular resurrection is the death of each one of you as an individual, while the General Resurrection is that which Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) has promised [for all His creatures together].<sup>23</sup> You must remember and reflect upon the words of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He):

On the Day when We shall gather the righteous unto the All-Merciful, a goodly company; and We shall drive the guilty into Hell, a weary herd. (19:85,86)<sup>24</sup>

A weary herd and a thirsty one indeed! The righteous will be gathered, but the guilty will be driven like a herd of cattle. May Allāh have mercy on any servant of His who remembers that Day, and let him be numbered among the righteous even now, today, so that he may be gathered with them when that Day comes. O you who have abandoned righteousness [*taqwā*!] On the Day of Resurrection the righteous will be gathered unto the All-Merciful [*ar-Raḥmān*], a goodly company, riding with the angels while their good deeds take visible shape all around them. Each one of them will have a thoroughbred [*najīb*] on which to ride, and that thoroughbred of his will be his deeds [*ʿamal*], while his turban will be his knowledge [*ʿilm*]. Good deeds will assume attractive forms, while bad deeds will take on ugly shapes.

<sup>22</sup> At this point in the Fifty-ninth Discourse of *The Sublime Revelation* [*al-Faṭḥ ar-Rabbānī*], Shaikh 'Abd al-Qādir (may Allāh be well pleased with him) goes on to say:

Then it requires that two necessities apply in your case: The first is that there is no one else left in your town, so you speak to the people out of necessity. The other is that you are commanded to speak by the feeling within your heart. You will then advance to this station [*maqām*], in order to bring creatures [*khalq*] back to the Creator [*Khāliq*].

<sup>23</sup> In *Utterances of Shaikh 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jilānī* [*Malfūẓāt*] (p. 89 of the translation published by Al-Baz) the Shaikh (may Allāh be well pleased with him) has said:

You are bound to answer the call of death. You will meet up with your fathers and mothers, brethren, friends and rulers. Let none of you ask: "When will the Resurrection take place?" For when you die you will experience your own Resurrection [*qiyāma*].

<sup>24</sup> *yawma naḥsburu 'l-muttaqīna ila 'r-Raḥmāni waḥdā—wa nasūqu 'l-mujrimīna ilā jabannama wirdā.*

The key to righteous devotion [*taqwā*] is repentance [*tauba*] and steadfastness in following it through. Repentance is likewise the key to the nearness of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He). Repentance is both the root and the branch of all that is good. This is why the righteous [*ṣālihūn*] never let themselves be distracted from it under any circumstances. Repent, O you backsliders, O you rebellious sinners! Make peace with your Lord by means of repentance. This heart is not worthy of the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He), as long as it still contains a single atom of this world and the slightest trace of longing for any created being. If you wish to make it whole and sound, therefore, you must drive out these attachments from your hearts. This will not cause you any harm or loss, for, once you have attained to contact with Him, this world and your fellow creatures will come to you, while you are there in His company, at His door. This is something that has been verified through the test of experience [*mujarrab*]. It has been experienced as a fact by those who practice abstinence, renunciation and pious restraint [*az-zāhidūn at-tārikūn al-mutawarriʿūn*].

O young man! You must practice sincere devotion [*ikhblāṣ al-ʿamal*] to Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) in your ritual prayer [*ṣalāt*], your fasting [*ṣiyām*], your performance of the pilgrimage [*ḥajj*], your payment of the alms-due [*zakāt*], and indeed in everything that you do. You must undertake a commitment to Him before your arrival in His presence. This commitment calls for nothing less than an attitude of sincere devotion, an affirmation of the Divine Unity [*tawḥīd*], a faithful adherence to the Sunna [of the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace)] and the Islāmic community [*jamāʿa*], an attitude of patience [*ṣabr*] and thankfulness [*shukr*], and a readiness to entrust your affairs to your Lord [*tafwīd*]. In relation to creatures, it calls for an attitude of rejection, and in relation to Him, an attitude of seeking. Toward all apart from Him, it calls for an indifference, and toward Him, a dedicated approach with your heart and your innermost being [*sirr*]. It calls for a feeling of detachment from everything else, and of love and ardent longing for Him. Then He will surely grant you a nearness [to Him] even here in this world, and in the hereafter He will grant you of His nearness and His bounty that which no eyes have ever seen, of which no ears have ever heard, and the very notion of which has never occurred to the human heart.



Sticking to this course will bring you at last to your Lord. If Iblīs comes up to you, trying to make you change and alter course, you must therefore appeal to your Lord for help, so that He may drive him away from you. You must appeal to Him for help, just as those who have gone before you appealed to Him for help in their time. You must do your work well, then think well of your Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He). Think well of Him and do your best to obey Him properly, for then He will have a lot to do with you. Much good is to be found in thinking well [*ḥusn az-ẓann*] of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), His Prophets [*anbiyā'*], His Messengers [*rusul*], and the righteous [*ṣāliḥīn*] among His servants.

**O young man!** You claim to be a Ṣūfī, but you are disturbed and confused. The Ṣūfī is one whose inner and outer have been purified [*ṣafā*] by following the Book of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) and the Sunna of His Messenger (Allāh bless him and give him peace). The more his purity [*ṣafā'*] increases, the more he emerges from the ocean of his existence [*wujūd*] and abandons his own will and choice and volition [*mashī'a*] because of the purity of his heart. **When a person's heart is purified, the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) becomes an ambassador [*ṣafīr*] between him and his Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He), just as Gabriel was.**

The foundation of goodness is following the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) in his word and his deed. The more the servant's heart is purified, the more he will see the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) in his sleep, commanding him to do something and forbidding him to do something else. The whole of him becomes a heart [*qalb*] and his physical form is separated off. He becomes a secret [*sirr*] with no publicity [*jahr*], pure clarity with no muddy confusion.<sup>25</sup>

To extract everything from the heart is to uproot the unshakable mountains. It calls for the pickaxes of strenuous effort and patient endurance of suffering and disastrous events. Do not go looking for that which does not fall into your hands. Good for you if you put into practice this black-on-white, and are Muslims! Good for you, on the Day of

<sup>25</sup> At this point in the Fifty-ninth Discourse of *The Sublime Revelation [al-Faṭḥ ar-Rabbānī]*, Shaikh 'Abd al-Qādir (may Allāh be well pleased with him) goes on to say:

The shell of his outer being withdraws aside from him, and he remains as a kernel [*ḥubb*] without a shell. He comes to be with the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) as far as his inner content [*ma'nā*] is concerned. His heart is trained with him and in his presence. His hand comes to be in his hand. The Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) is the one to be consulted about Him, as the door-keeper before His presence.

Resurrection you will be in the company of the Muslims and not in the company of the unbelievers [*kāfirūn*]/! Congratulations on being lodged in the Garden of Paradise or at its gate, and not being among those consigned to the depths of Hell! You must be humble and not arrogant. Humility raises up, while arrogance casts down. As the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) has said:

If someone is humble toward Allāh, Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) will raise him up.

Allāh has some special servants who perform such works of goodness that their deeds are mountain-like in their proportions, like the good deeds of their predecessors, yet they humble themselves in the presence of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) and they say: “We have done nothing good enough to ensure that we shall enter the Garden of Paradise. If we do gain admission there, it will be through the mercy [*raḥma*] of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), and if we are not allowed to enter, it will be on account of His justice [*‘adl*].” They are constantly ready to do His bidding, as they stand in His presence in a state of personal bankruptcy [*iflās*].

You must repent and acknowledge your shortcomings. Repentance [*tawba*] is the life-force [*ḥayāt*] of the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He). He restores the earth to life with refreshing rain, after it has become dead, and He restores our hearts to life, after their death, through repentance and the awakening of conscience [*yaqza*]. O disobedient sinners, repent!

Do not despair of the mercy of Allāh; [surely Allāh forgives sins altogether; surely Allāh is the All-Forgiving, the All-Compassionate.] (39:53)<sup>26</sup>

Almighty and Glorious is He! You must never despair of His life-giving spirit [*rūḥ*].

O you who are dead at heart, you must devote yourselves constantly to the remembrance of your Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He), to the recitation of His Book, to following the Sunna of His Messenger, and to attendance at meetings held for the purpose of practicing remembrance [*majālis adh-dhikr*]. Your hearts will then be restored to life, just as the dead earth is restored to life by the refreshing rain [*ghaiṭh*].

<sup>26</sup> *lā taqnaṭū min raḥmati ‘llāb : [inna ‘llāba yaḡhfiru ‘db-dbunūba jamī‘ā : innabu Huwa ‘l-Ghaḡfuru ‘r-Raḡīm].*

Constant remembrance [*dhikr*] is the cause of constant good in this world and the hereafter. When a person's heart is sound, remembrance becomes constant within it. It is inscribed all around it and all over it, so his eyes may sleep but his heart will be remembering his Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He). He inherits this from his Prophet (may Allāh the Exalted bless him and give him peace), **who used to remember Allāh at every single moment.**

**The people [of the Lord] will normally go to sleep only when slumber overtakes them irresistibly, although there are some among them who deliberately take an hour of sleep in the course of the night, as a means of helping themselves to stay fully awake for the rest of the nighttime. By making this slight concession to the needs of the lower self [*nafs*], they pacify it and prevent it from giving them any serious trouble.**

The story is told of how a certain righteous man (may Allāh the Exalted bestow His mercy upon him) was handling a string of prayer-beads [*subḥa*], using them to count his praises of the Lord [*yusabbiḥu bibā*], until at some point he dozed off. Then he woke up again, and saw that the beads were circulating in his hand, while his tongue was still remembering his Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He).

A certain righteous man used to force himself to sleep for part of the night, and would get himself ready for it without actually needing to rest. When asked about this, he said: "My heart sees my Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He)." He spoke the truth in what he said, because a true dream [*manām ṣādiq*] is an inspiration [*waḥy*] from Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He). The delight of his eye [*qurratu 'ainih*] was in his sleep.

**When someone is drawn close to Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), His angels are charged with the task of supervising that person's every moment. If he goes to sleep, they sit at his head and at his feet; they stand guard over him both in front of him and behind him. Satan may try to prod him, but he does not feel the nearness of his presence, for he sleeps in the safekeeping of Allāh and in His safekeeping he will eventually return to consciousness. Whether he is in motion or at rest, he is always in the safekeeping of Allāh (Exalted is He).**

**O Allāh, install us in Your safekeeping under all circumstances, and:**

**Give us in this world good, and good in the hereafter, and guard us against the torment of the fire! (2:201)<sup>27</sup>**

<sup>27</sup> *ātina fi 'd-dunyā ḥasanatan wa fi 'l-ākhirati ḥasanatan wa qina 'adbāba 'n-nār.*

## The Third Discourse <sup>28</sup>

The Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) is reported as having said:

Part of the excellence of a man's Islām is paying no attention to that which does not concern him.<sup>29</sup>

To busy oneself with that which is irrelevant is the distraction of idle fools. Deprived of the good pleasure of his Master [*Mawlā*] is he who fails to put into practice what He commands, and who occupies himself with things he has not been instructed to deal with. This is deprivation its very self, death its very self and banishment its very self.

**O young man! You must carry out the commandments and observe the prohibitions [laid down by your Lord]. Make sure that you are fully in compliance [with the sacred law], then place yourself in the hand of destiny [*qadar*] without asking 'why?' and without asking 'how?' It is far better for you to be looked after by Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), with His knowledge of you, than for you to be looking after yourself, with your ignorance of your Lord. Be satisfied with what He has given you. Try to be grateful for it and do not ask Him for more, since you do not recognize the best part of what you have already.**

Abstinence [*zuhd*] is what gives comfort to the hearts of obedient abstainers. The burden of abstinence is borne by the physical constitution. The burden of intimate knowledge [*ma'rifā*] is borne by the heart. The burden of nearness [to the Lord] is borne by the innermost being [*sirr*]. Be abstinent, be satisfied, and be grateful. Be pleased with your Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He), and do not be pleased with yourself. Think well of other people. Give up thinking the worst of other people,

<sup>28</sup> The passages printed in ordinary (non-bold) Jilani font are also to be found in the Sixtieth Discourse of Shaikh 'Abd al-Qādir's work *The Sublime Revelation [al-Faṭḥ ar-Rabbānī]*. (See p. 406 of the translation published by Al-Baz.)

<sup>29</sup> *min ḥusni Islāmi 'l-mar'i tarkubu mā lā ya'nīb.*

and do not hold a high opinion of yourself. Refrain from gratifying the desires of the flesh, for the effects of such restraint are healing and purifying to the heart. To satisfy one's appetite for lawful food [*ḥalāl*] is quite enough to blur the perception of the heart and render it intoxicated, so how about the influence of food that is actually unlawful [*ḥarām*]? This explains the following saying of the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace):

The right diet is the main part of all medical treatment [*al-‘imya ra’ su ‘d-dawā’*].

You must accustom every physical body to what is normal for it, since in these three [Arabic] words the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) was making a collective statement applicable to all bodies.

Your involvement in this world requires that you have a righteous intention [*niyya ṣāliḥa*], otherwise you deserve to be viewed with disgust. In all your affairs and undertakings you must say: “There is no power, nor is there any strength, except through Allāh, the High, the Almighty.”<sup>30</sup> You should set aside one hour for your worldly interests, one hour for your interest in the hereafter, one hour for your personal concerns, and one hour for the benefit of your family, then dedicate all the remaining hours to your Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He). You must concentrate first of all on the cleanliness [*ṭabāra*] of your heart, for this is an obligatory duty [*farīda*]. Then turn your attention to deeper knowledge [*ma’rifa*]. If you miss the root, your preoccupation with the branch will not be accepted of you. There is no benefit in cleanliness of the physical parts of the body combined with defilement of the heart. You must cleanse your physical limbs and organs by following the Sunna, and your heart by putting the Qur’ān into practice. Take care of your heart, so that your physical body will be taken care of. Every vessel exudes its own contents. Whatever is in your heart will ooze out from you through your physical parts.

You must always be humble, for whenever you behave with humility, you will be purified, enhanced and raised to a higher spiritual plane. If you do not conduct yourself with humility, on the other hand, it can only mean that you are ignorant of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), His Messengers [*rusul*] and His saints [*awliyā’*], His law [*ḥukm*], His

<sup>30</sup> *lā ḥawla wa lā quwwata illā bi’llāhi ‘l-‘Alīyyi ‘l-‘Azīm.*

knowledge [*‘ilm*], His destiny [*qadar*] and His power [*qudra*], in the sphere of this world and also in the realm of the hereafter.

How often do you listen without understanding what you hear, without putting it into practice, and without even making a sincere effort to pay attention? So why do you come here at all? Your presence and your absence are one and the same! When you come to be with me here, but with no intention of acting on what I have to say, you are merely being a nuisance to the other people present. As long as you are stuck there in your place of business, you feel depressed because your plans have not been working out, but then you come here to me and your depression leaves you. It is replaced by a sense of euphoria. You listen, but it is as if you had not heard.

O you who own so much property, forget about your property! Come and sit here, in the midst of the poor [*fuqarā’*]. Be humble in the presence of Allāh and in their presence. O you who possess such a noble pedigree [*nasab*], forget about your pedigree and come here! The genuinely noble pedigree is devotion to righteousness [*taqwā*]. Somebody once asked the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace): “Who are the members of your family, O Muḥammad?” He replied (Allāh bless him and give him peace) by saying:

Every dutiful believer belongs to the family of Muḥammad [*kullu taqiyyin ālu Muḥammadin*].

Do not approach me on the basis of your noble pedigree. Approach me on the basis of your righteous devotion. Be sensible! You have nothing of real value to offer. You can have no standing in the presence of Allāh on the basis of your ancestral pedigree alone. For that you must acquire the genuine pedigree of righteous devotion. As Allāh Himself has said (Almighty and Glorious is He):

Surely the noblest among you in the sight of Allāh is the one of you who is most devoted to righteousness. (49:13)<sup>31</sup>

There is nothing good in any of you, O boy, O youth, O shaikh, O seeker, as long as you have not purified your diet by ridding it of every morsel of unlawful food [*ḥarām*]. Most of you, the great majority, eat food that is at least contaminated, if not downright unlawful. When someone eats forbidden food, his heart becomes completely dark. When

<sup>31</sup> *inna akramakum ‘inda ‘llābi atqākum.*

a person eats things of dubious quality, his heart becomes very murky. Your lower selves and your passionate desires will simply dismiss any scruples you may have about the eating of forbidden food. The lower self [*nafs*] and the passions [*hawā*] are quite impulsive when it comes to the pursuit of carnal pleasures and delights, to which they are readily addicted. Suppose you have been in the habit of feeding your lower self with grits [*khushkār*], and it tries to persuade you to give it honey for a change. Your response to this should be to make it eat barley bread, until its one and only desire is to have you put it back onto its old diet of grits.

When the lower self is not subject to pious restraint in its diet, it may be compared to a hen—a hen that goes pecking around in the garbage dumps, so that its intake is a mixture of polluted matter and pure food. If someone proposes to eat the flesh of this hen, or the eggs it lays, he must keep it in a confined space and provide it with pure food, for only then will the bird and its eggs become fit to eat. You must likewise restrain your lower self from eating forbidden food, and provide it with a pure and lawful diet, until it has lost all the flesh it developed from its unlawful intake. You must also discourage it from eating even lawful food with a passionate appetite.

Suppose one of you had to answer the question: “Would you like to die while you are doing what you are doing right now?” Suppose that person said “No,” so he was then told: “In that case you must repent and improve your behavior.” What if his response to this should be: “That is what I shall do—if Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) will help me to succeed”? He is entitled to maintain that repentance is contingent on the decree of destiny [*qadar*], but this must not be used as a pretext to allow for the satisfaction of carnal appetites and desires, nor as a basis for postponement, a means of avoiding a definite answer—yes or no. When death comes, it will snatch him away without warning, just when he is enjoying the pleasures and comforts of life. It will snatch him away from his family and friends. It will snatch him away from his shop and his profits. Death will come upon him suddenly, while his last will and testament is still unwritten, while his accounts are still unregistered, while his expectations are still far-reaching and widespread.

The correct way of thinking is that which brings the righteous [*ṣālihūn*] nearer [to their Lord]—away from civilization and into the desert waste.

It eliminates their merriment and perpetuates their sadness. Whenever someone really comes to know [*‘arafa*] Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), his sadness and anxiety are sure to increase. He comes to have an inner voice that converses with him, and a preoccupation that keeps him engrossed. He would rather not have to listen to the words of his fellow creatures, and he feels no desire to meet with any of them. He would dearly love to be set free from his family and his property. He would dearly love to transfer his allotted shares to other owners. He would dearly love to see his nature and character transformed into angelic qualities. Yet the more he wishes to be set free from all these human limitations, the more he finds himself constrained by the law [*ḥukm*], and the more the Controller [*Muqayyid*] keeps him under control by serving notice of predestination [*sābiqa*] and foreknowledge [*‘ilm*]. He is thus under constant supervision by night and by day. He moves toward his Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He), away from this world. Then the moment comes when he is overwhelmed by the direct experience [*ma’ rifa*] of Him, so He watches over him both outwardly [*zāhīran*] and inwardly [*bāṭinan*].

Al-Faṭḥ al-Mawṣilī (may Allāh the Exalted be well pleased with him) used to say in his confidential prayers [*munājāt*]: “How much longer will You keep me at a distance, confining me to this world? When will You transport me to You? When shall I be relieved of this world and of creatures?”

What analogy would suit you best? Surely it is just as Noah (peace be upon him) said to his son:

“O my dear son, come aboard with us, and do not be with the unbelievers!” He said: “I shall take refuge in some mountain that will keep me safe from the water.” (11:42,43)<sup>32</sup>

The preacher [*wā’ iz*] is saying to you: “Come aboard! Embark with me on the ship of salvation!” But you respond by saying: “I shall take refuge in some mountain that will keep me safe from the water.” In your case the mountain consists of your exaggerated expectations and your greedy desire for the things of this world. The angel of death will be arriving very soon, and you will be torn away from that mountain of yours. Be sensible, O servants of Allāh! Leave your houses on that

<sup>32</sup> *yā bunayya ‘rkab ma’anā wa lā takun ma’a ‘l-kāfirīn—qāla sa-āwī ilā jabalin ya’šimuni minā ‘l-mā’.*



mountain. You have erected the walls of your religious belief and practice on a nonexistent foundation. You have set up your tents with nothing to hold them in place. You need to demolish and rebuild, for this world has established itself in your hearts.

Let me take charge of you, so that I may purify you and make you clean. I shall be giving you some doses of medicine. The potions I shall give you to drink are: pious restraint [*warā'*], abstinence [*zuhd*], dutiful devotion [*taqwā*], faith [*īmān*], conviction [*īqān*], experience [*ma'rifā*], knowledge [*'ilm*], indifference to all things, and complete detachment from all things. Then you will be ready to receive your existence [*wujūd*] in the presence of your Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He), nearness to Him and remembrance of Him. Anyone who is truly worthy of Him will come to be a sun and a moon for His creatures, and a guide who takes them by their hands and leads them from the shore of this world to the shore of the hereafter. The Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) is reported as having said:

In every specialized craft, you should seek the help of a qualified expert.<sup>33</sup>

O young man! You have not been created merely for the purpose of acquiring worldly things, for nothing more than eating and drinking and getting married. You must repent and return [to your Lord], before the Angel of Death (peace be upon him) comes and snatches you away while you are doing something bad.

Every good preacher will advise you to observe the commandments and prohibitions [of the sacred law], and to endure with patience whatever destiny [*qadar*] brings along. You must also endure with patience the pain and suffering inflicted on you by your fellow creatures, including your next-door neighbors, for patience is the source of so much that is good. You are all under orders to practice patience, and you have been made responsible for yourselves and for your flocks. As the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) has said:

Each and every one of you is a shepherd, and each and every one of you is responsible for his flock.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>33</sup> *istā'inū 'alā kulli ṣan'atin bi-ṣālihi ablibā.*

<sup>34</sup> *kullukum rā'in wa kullukum ma'sūlun 'an ra'iyyatib.*

You must endure with patience whatever is decreed by destiny [*qadar*], until suffering is transformed into certainty [*yaqīn*]. Patience is the foundation of all that is good. The angels [*malā'ika*] were afflicted with trials and tribulations, and they bore them with patience. The Prophets [*anbiyā'*] were afflicted with trials and tribulations, and they bore them with patience. The righteous [*ṣāliḥūn*] have been afflicted with trials and tribulations, and they have borne them with patience. Now you are following in the footsteps of the people [of the Lord], so you must do as they did. You must endure with patience as they endured with patience.

When the heart is sound, it is indifferent to whether anyone agrees or disagrees with it, to whether anyone praises or blames it, to whether anyone gives or refuses to give it something, to whether anyone brings it close or keeps it at a distance, and to whether anyone accepts it or rejects it, because the sound heart is filled with affirmation of Divine Unity [*tawḥīd*], absolute trust [*tawakkul*], certitude [*yaqīn*], helpful guidance to success [*tawfiq*], knowledge [*ilm*], faith [*īmān*], and nearness [*qurb*] to Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He). He sees all creatures in their essential weakness, lowliness and poverty, yet he will not be arrogant toward a little child amongst them. He becomes like a lion when battle is joined with the unbelievers [*kuffār*] and hypocrites [*munāfiqūn*], out of zeal for Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He). In His presence he becomes a discarded piece of flesh, and he is meek and humble toward those who are righteous [*ṣāliḥūn*] and piously devoted [*muttaqūn wari'ūn*]. Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) has described the kind of people who have such attributes, for He has said:

Hard against the unbelievers, merciful among themselves. (48:29)<sup>35</sup>

Such a servant [of the Lord] comes into being from beyond the comprehension of ordinary creatures and from beyond their control. He emerges as a manifestation of His words (Almighty and Glorious is He):

And He creates what you do not know. (16:8)<sup>36</sup>

All of this is the fruit of the affirmation of Divine Unity [*tawḥīd*], sincerity [*ikhlās*] and patience [*ṣabr*]. Consider the experience of our Prophet Muḥammad (Allāh bless him and give him peace). When he endured with patience he was raised up to the Seventh Heaven, where he

<sup>35</sup> *asbiddā'u 'ala 'l-kuffāri ruḥamā'u bainahum.*

<sup>36</sup> *wa yakbluqu mā lā ta'lamūn.*

saw his Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He) and was drawn near to Him. In his case the building proved sound, after the foundation of patience had been firmly laid. All good results are based on patience, and this is why Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) has mentioned it so frequently and enjoined it so emphatically, for He has said (Exalted is He):

O you who believe, be patient, and vie in patience; be steadfast, and observe your duty to Allāh, in order that you may succeed. (3:200)<sup>37</sup>

O Allāh, include us among those who endure with patience. Let us be their faithful followers in active goodness, in word and in deed, in private and in public, in form and in substance, in all our states and circumstances, and:

Give us in this world good, and good in the hereafter, and guard us against the torment of the fire! (2:201)<sup>38</sup>



<sup>37</sup> *yā ayyuba 'lladbīna āmanu 'šbirū wa šābirū wa rābiṭū : wa 'ttaqu 'llāba la'allakum tufliḥūn.*

<sup>38</sup> *ātina fi 'd-dunyā ḥasanatan wa fi 'l-ākbarati ḥasanatan wa qinā 'adbāba 'n-nār.*

## The Fourth Discourse

The seeker [*murīd*] is stationed beneath the shade of repentance, while the one who is sought after [*murād*] is stationed beneath the shade of the providential care [*ināya*] of his Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He). The seeker must travel on the ground, while the one who is sought after goes flying through the air [*al-murīd sā'ir wa 'l-murād ṭā'ir*]. The seeker is at the door, while the one who is sought after is beyond the door, in the chamber of nearness. If the seeker exerts himself with proper diligence, he will come to be one who is sought after. No one but a crazy fool would expect to find nearness without needing to make any effort. (It should be understood, of course, that our statements on this subject are relevant to the most common norm, not to the extraordinary case.)

O young man! How long was it before our master Moses (blessing and peace be upon him) experienced nearness and intimate friendship, after suffering severe hardships and facing many difficult struggles? When he left the palace of Pharaoh, as a fugitive escaping to save his life, he had to work hard for many years as a shepherd tending sheep. After all that, he experienced what he experienced. After so much, and then so much more again, nearness was finally his due.

When he had suffered hunger and thirst and exile in a foreign land, there appeared to him his jewel and his wife, the daughter of Shu'aib. Good fortune came to him through this woman. She was the cause of his obtaining sustenance, on account of the service he performed for her sheep. He was hungry to the point of starvation, yet when he had watered her sheep for her, his sense of decency made him withdraw beneath the tree, and would not let him seek remuneration for doing a good deed, so preordainment [*sābiqa*] gave him strength, the force of preservation [*ṣiyāna*] came to his support, and the approving glances of the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He) consoled him. Those glances

prompted him to speak, to put a request to his Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He), until he eventually said:

My Lord, I am needy of whatever good You send down for me. (28:24)<sup>39</sup>

It was at this point that the daughter of Shu'aib came back and approached him, following the instructions of her father, to whom she then proceeded to conduct him. Shu'aib asked him about the state of his affairs, so Moses (peace be upon him) told him the whole of his story, to which he responded by saying:

Do not be afraid! You have escaped from the wrongdoing folk. (28:25)<sup>40</sup>

He thereupon married him to his daughter, and hired him to look after his flocks of sheep.

Moses (peace be upon him) soon forgot about Pharaoh, and readily adjusted to his humble situation as one of the shepherds. He spent night and day with the sheep, so he grew accustomed to being out in the wilderness with only the dumb animals for company. From poverty he learned the lessons of abstinence and solitude. Thus his heart was purified of attachment to his fellow creatures, and his character became firmly established in the course of those years. The kingdom of Pharaoh departed from his heart, and this world, together with all that it contains, made its exit from his innermost being [*sirr*].

When Moses (blessing and peace be upon him) had at long last completed the term agreed between him and Shu'aib, he was released from his contractual obligation toward the latter, while the covenant of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) and his duty to Him remained incumbent upon his heart. The time had now come to say farewell to Shu'aib. Taking his wife with him, he traveled for three days (or parasangs) away from Madyan. Then, just when night had begun to fall, his wife—who was pregnant—suddenly began to feel the onset of labor pains. She asked him to strike up a fire, in order to shed some light on her surroundings, so he reached for the flint stick [*zand*] and tried to make it strike a spark, but not a single spark would it produce! Meanwhile the night was getting very dark. As the darkness became intense, Moses (peace be upon him) felt bewildering confusion attacking him from every side, and the whole wide world had shrunk to a narrow space around him. What was there left for him to do, a lonely stranger

<sup>39</sup> *Rabbi innī li-mā anzalta ilayya min kbairin faqīr.*

<sup>40</sup> *lā takhaf: najawta minā 'l-qawmi 'z-zālimin .*

lost on an unfamiliar road, with his wife in that distressing and painful condition? He stood on an outcrop of high ground, peering to the right and to the left, behind and in front, in case he might hear a voice or catch sight of a fire.

He did in fact see a fire, over in the direction of the Mount [*aṭ-Ṭūr*], so he said to his wife: “Stay here awhile, for I have noticed a fire. Perhaps I can bring you something from it, and I shall ask the people there for information concerning the best route to take.”<sup>41</sup>

And when he came to it, a voice cried from the right bank of the valley... (28:30)<sup>42</sup>

When he drew near to it, and was proposing to take a firebrand from it, the whole situation was miraculously transformed. The ordinary state of affairs had disappeared, and the dynamics of Reality [*asbāb al-haqīqa*] had come into play. He could no longer think about his family and their welfare. (They were not simply neglected, however, for his wife was approached by someone who would treat her with honor and respect, set her affairs in order, and see to it that her needs were properly met.) For someone had cried out to him, someone had addressed him, someone had spoken to him. That voice was the voice of the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He), coming across to him indirectly:

...from the right bank of the valley, in the sacred hollow, from the tree. (28:30)<sup>43</sup>

From the tree of his heart it said to him:

O Moses, I am indeed Allāh, Lord of all the worlds. (28:30)<sup>44</sup>

The voice was saying: “I am Allāh—which means that I am not an angel, not one of the jinn, and not a human being, but the Lord of all the worlds.” In other words, it was giving the lie to Pharaoh in respect of his statement: “I am your Lord the Most High” (79:24),<sup>45</sup> and refuting his claim to divinity [*ilāhiyya*]. In effect, the voice was asserting: “I am indeed Allāh, only I, the Creator of Pharaoh and of all other creatures—the jinn, the human beings, the angels, and all forms of creation down

<sup>41</sup> A near-paraphrase—not a direct quotation—of the words uttered by Moses (peace be upon him) in the Qur’ān (26:29).

<sup>42</sup> *fa-lammā atābā nūdiya min sbāṭi’i ’l-wādi ’l-aimani...*

<sup>43</sup> ...*min sbāṭi’i ’l-wādi ’l-aimani fi ’l-buq’ati ’l-mubārakati mina ’sb-sbajarati.*

<sup>44</sup> *yā Mūsā innī Ana ’llāhu Rabbu ’l-ālamīn.*

<sup>45</sup> [*fa-qāla*] *ana Rabbukumu ’l-a’lā.*

from beneath the Heavenly Throne [*‘Arsh*] to beneath the surface of the earth, in the world of your time and the world of those who shall come after you, until the Day of Resurrection [*Yawm al-Qiyāma*]. I am their Originator [*Mubdi‘*], so none of them can say: ‘I am Allāh.’”

Our Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He) is an Articulate Speaker [*Mutakallim*]. He is not dumb. This is why Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) has emphasized the fact that He does indeed possess the faculty of speech [*kalām*], for He has told us:

And Allāh spoke directly to Moses. (4:164)<sup>46</sup>

Allāh (Exalted is He) has a form of speech that can be heard and understood. When Moses heard the speech of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), he very nearly expired from the shock, and he fell flat on his face in awe. He heard a speech like no kind of speech he had ever heard before. It came upon the feebleness of the human condition with such a stunning impact that it knocked him down and out, so his Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He) sent an angel to set him back on his feet. The angel placed one of his hands on his breast and the other behind his back, until he was capable of holding himself erect, and restored his mind to consciousness, so that he could listen intelligently to his Lord’s speech and understand its meaning. Moses (peace be upon him) did in fact prove capable of this, after going through an experience in which it seemed as if the end of the world must be at hand, and as if the whole wide world had shrunk to a narrow space around him.

Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) then commanded him to betake himself to Pharaoh and his people, and to be the Messenger [*Rasūl*] unto them.

He [Moses] said: “My Lord! Expand my breast for me, and make my task easy for me. And loosen a knot from my tongue, so that they may understand what I have to say. Appoint for me an assistant from among my own folk, Aaron, my brother. Confirm my strength through him. (20:25–31)<sup>47</sup>

Moses really did have a knot in his tongue, which prevented him from speaking with fluency. He had acquired this impediment as the result of

<sup>46</sup> *wa kallama ‘llāhu Mūsā taklīmā.*

<sup>47</sup> *qāla Rabbi ‘sbraḥ lī ṣadrī—wa yassir lī amrī—wa ‘ḥlul ‘uqḍatan min lisānī—yafqabū qawli—wa ‘j‘al lī wazīran min abli—Hārūna akbī—ushḍud bibi azrī.*

something that happened to him in the company of Pharaoh (may Allāh curse him!) when he was just a little baby. It affected him so badly that, whenever he wanted to utter a word, he would stammer and stutter over the pronunciation of the letters, taking as long as any normal speaker would take to utter seventy words. As we have mentioned, this problem was caused by an incident that occurred in Pharaoh's palace, when Moses was still in his infancy. This is how it happened:

Pharaoh's wife Āsiya brought the baby Moses into the presence of her husband. "This child," she told him, "will be a great comfort to me and to you. You must not put him to death." So Pharaoh took him from her and held him in his arms, intending to give him a kiss. But then, when the child grabbed his beard and tugged it to and fro, Pharaoh exclaimed: "This is the infant who will one day cause me to lose my kingdom. I have no alternative but to kill him!" His wife protested, saying: "This is just a tiny baby, who has no rational motive for his actions!" Then she told her husband to send for a ruby and a red-hot coal. "See if he can tell the difference between them," she said. "If he stretches his little hands toward the ruby, and shies away from the red-hot piece of coal, then go ahead and kill him. But if he does not distinguish between the two, and reaches for the burning coal, you must not put him to death." Having agreed to conduct the experiment on these terms, they set the two items in front of the child, who reached for the red-hot coal and popped it in his mouth—with the result that his speech was impaired. Then Āsiya said: "Did I not tell you that he could not have a deliberate motive for what he did to you?" Her husband therefore let him be, and did not put him to death, and so it was that Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) allowed him to grow up in the palace of Pharaoh.

Glory be to Him who mended his tongue, and granted him a loophole and a way of escape from every occasion of grief, distress, and sinful misconduct! In His own glorious words:

And whenever someone observes his duty to Allāh, Allāh will prepare a way out for him. And He will provide for him from sources he could never imagine. And whoever puts all his trust in Allāh, He will suffice him. (65:2,3)<sup>48</sup>

Once this heart of his becomes pure and sound, the believer will hear the call of the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He) from all the

<sup>48</sup> *wa man yattaqi 'llāba yaj' al labu makbrajā—wa yarzuqhu min ḥaithu lā yaḥtasib: wa man yatawakkal 'ala 'llābi fa-Huwa ḥasbuh.*



six directions [from in front and from behind, from right and left, from above and below]. He will hear the call of every Prophet [*nabī*] and Messenger [*rasūl*], of every saint [*walī*] and champion of the truth [*ṣiddīq*]. For at this stage he will draw near to Him, so that life, as far as he is concerned, will mean nearness to Him, while death means remoteness from Him. Contentment for him will come to reside in his intimate conversation [*munājāt*] with Him, and he will be completely satisfied with this, to the exclusion of everything else. He will not care about losing all the things of this world, nor will he care about hunger and thirst, sickness and all the symptoms of disease.

You must apply yourselves with patience to mastering the observance of the law [*ḥukm*], for then you will experience the removal of the veil from knowledge [*ʿilm*]. The Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He) has commanded you to practice patience, so be patient. He has commanded His Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) in particular, and all of you in general, to practice patience. The commandment addressed to him is also applicable to you. Allāh (Exalted is He) has said:

So be patient [O Muḥammad], as the Messengers possessed of constancy were also patient. (46:35)<sup>49</sup>

In other words: “Be patient, O Muḥammad, as they were patient with Me in carrying out My judgments and My decrees, imposed upon them in respect of their families, their worldly goods, and their children, and in putting up with ill-treatment at the hands of their fellow creatures.” They faced up to all of this with an attitude of tolerance, but how little tolerance you possess! I do not see one of you being prepared to let his companion have his say, or to offer an excuse on his behalf. You must learn from the example set by the Messenger (Allāh bless him and give him peace) in his moral standards and his conduct. You must follow in his footsteps (Allāh bless him and give him peace).

You must bear with patience the burden of the initial phase, so that comfort may come in the final stage. The initial phase is trouble and discomfort, while the final stage is peace and tranquillity. Our Prophet Muḥammad (Allāh bless him and give him peace) was imbued with a

<sup>49</sup> *fa-ṣbir kamā ṣabara ulu l-ʿazmi minā r-rusuli.*

fondness for private seclusion. On certain days he would hear someone saying, “O Muḥammad!”, but he would run away from that voice, and he did not realize what it was. He continued to respond in this fashion for quite some time, until the day came when he realized what it was, so then he held his ground instead of running away. At one point, however, the voice stopped calling out to him. This left him feeling so terribly depressed that he took to wandering about high up in the mountains, and actually came very close to throwing himself down from them. At the outset the voice was something to run away from, while at the later stage it became the object of a quest.

At the outset there is trouble and discomfort, and later on there is peace and tranquillity. The seeker is involved in a quest [*al-murīd ṭālib*], while one who is sought is the object of a quest [*al-murād maṭlūb*]. Moses (blessing and peace be upon him) was a seeker [*murīd*], whereas our Prophet Muḥammad (Allāh bless him and give him peace) was one of those who are sought [*murād*]. Moses (blessing and peace be upon him) remained in the shadow of his own presence, and he went in quest of the vision [of the Lord] on the mountain called Mount Sinai [*Ṭūr Sīnā*]. As for our Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace), he was granted the the vision [of the Lord] without any quest. He was drawn near without craving and begging. He was enriched without trying to find riches, and he got to see what is normally invisible without going in quest of the sight.

Moses (blessing and peace be upon him) went in quest of the vision [of the Lord], so it was not granted to him. We should learn a lesson from the punishment he had to suffer, because he tried to obtain what had not been allotted to him in this world. As for our Prophet Muḥammad (Allāh bless him and give him peace), he behaved with the utmost propriety, correctly assessed his own worth, exerted himself without stint, maintained an attitude of humble modesty, and did not act obtrusively. He was therefore granted that which had not been granted to others, because of his indifference to all but the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He), and his readiness to comply with His wishes.

Greediness is blameworthy. You must be completely satisfied with whatever your Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He) has allotted to you,

and be content with patience. If a person can be patient, it has been said, his heart will be enriched and his poverty will disappear.

You should spend some time in places set aside for private retreat, in which you can perform your worship [*‘ibāda*] and do so with sincere devotion [*ikhhlās*]. Loneliness is better than bad company. Once upon a time, there was a righteous man [*ṣālih*] who always had a dog by his side. A curious person asked: “Why do you keep that dog beside you?” So he replied: “It is better than a wicked human companion!” How could the righteous fail to love solitude, when their hearts are filled with the intimate friendship [*uns*] they enjoy in the company of their Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He)? How could they fail to shun the society of their fellow creatures, when their hearts are so indifferent to any benefit or harm that may come from that quarter, and so intent on the harm or benefit that may come from their Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He)? The wine of nearness [to Him] keeps them alive, while idle entertainment is the death of them. The law [*ḥukm*] strips them bare, and insight into the mysteries [*asrār*] causes them to weep. You may regard them as lunatics in relation to their fellow creatures, but they are intelligent, wise and learned in relation to Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He).

If anyone wishes to be a pious abstainer [*zāhid*], let him fit this description. Otherwise, he may as well spare himself the trouble. O you and your affectations! O you and your artificial manners! Arrant nonsense is what you are all about. This business cannot be accomplished through fasting by day, keeping vigil by night, and practicing austerity in diet and dress, while the lower self [*nafs*] is left unchecked, along with the passions [*hawā*], ignorance, and undue regard for mere creatures. This thing can only come about through genuine abstinence.

Be sincere and you will be saved. Reflect on the matter, for then you will come to be sincere. Be honest and truthful, for then you will reach your destination and draw near to your Lord. Raise your aspiration high, for then you will rise to the heights. Surrender to Allāh (Exalted is He), for then you will be safe. Comply with His wishes, for then you will receive His helpful guidance. Be content with Him, for then you will

earn His good pleasure. Make a start, for then the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He) will complete the creation for you.

O Allāh, take charge of our affairs in this world and in the hereafter. Do not leave us in the care of our own selves, nor in the care of any of Your creatures, and:

Give us in this world good, and good in the hereafter, and guard us against the torment of the fire! (2:201)<sup>50</sup>



<sup>50</sup> *ātinā fi 'd-dunyā ḥasanatan wa fi 'l-ākhirati ḥasanatan wa qinā 'adhāba 'n-nār.*

## The Fifth Discourse <sup>51</sup>

**A**llāh (Exalted is He) has said in one of His revealed utterances:

A liar is he who claims to love Me, yet who goes to sleep and forgets Me as soon as the night sets in.<sup>52</sup>

If you are one of those who love Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), you will stay awake and keep vigil, and if you ever do fall asleep it will only happen because sleep has overwhelmed you with irresistible force [*ghalaba*]. The lover [*muḥibb*] is under the burden of stress and strain, while the beloved [*maḥbūb*] feels comfortably at ease. The lover is one who seeks [*ṭālib*], while the beloved is one who is sought after [*maṭlūb*].

The Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) is reported as having said:

Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) will say to Gabriel: “Put such-and-such a person to sleep, and make so-and-so get up.”

There are two ways of taking this, [the first being]: “Make a certain person—the lover [*muḥibb*—get up, and put another person—the beloved [*maḥbūb*—to sleep. The former has claimed that he loves Me, so I must certainly examine him and put him in his proper place, until the leaves of his being with any but Me fall from him. Make him get up, until the proof of his claim is established, until his love is confirmed. And put a certain other person to sleep, because he is My beloved. He has long been toiling hard. Not a trace is left with him of any other than Me. His love for Me has become single, and confirmed are his claim, his proof and his fulfillment of My covenant. It is now My turn to fulfill his covenant. He is a guest, and the guest is not made to serve and toil. I shall let him sleep in

<sup>51</sup> The passages printed in ordinary (non-bold) Jilani font are also to be found—with only minor differences almost entirely explicable as due to mistakes by the copyist of *Jalā’ al-Khawāṭir*—in the Sixtieth and Sixty-first Discourses of Shaikh ‘Abd al-Qādir’s work *The Sublime Revelation [al-Faṭḥ ar-Rabbānī]*. (See pp. 409–20 of the translation published by Al-Baz.)

<sup>52</sup> *kadhaba mani ‘dda’ā maḥabbatī idhā janna ‘l-lailu nāma ‘annī.*

the chamber of My tender care, and I shall let him sit at the table of My gracious favor. I shall entertain him in My nearness and I shall remove him from the presence of all others besides Me. His affection [*mawadda*] has proved to be genuine, and when affection is authentic formalities are dispensed with.”

The other interpretation is: **“Put so-and-so to sleep, for his purpose in worshipping Me is to win the favor of his fellow creatures. And wake that other person up, for his purpose in worshipping Me is to win My favor.** Put so-and-so to sleep, for I dislike the sound of his voice, and make that other person get up, for I love to hear his voice.”

The lover becomes a loved one only when his heart is purified of everything apart from his Master (Almighty and Glorious is He), so it has no desire to leave Him again and go back to any other. The way for the heart to reach this station [*maqām*] is through the performance of the obligatory religious duties [*ḥarāʾid*], patient renunciation of unlawful things [*ḥarām*] and carnal desires [*shahawāt*], obtaining things that are permissible [*mubāḥ*] and lawful [*ḥalāl*] without passion [*hawā*] and lust [*shahwa*] and involvement [*wujūd*], and the practice of salutary restraint [*warāʾ shāfi*] and perfect abstinence [*zuhd kāmil*]. It is the giving up of everything apart from Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), opposition to the lower self [*nafs*], the passions [*hawā*] and the devil [*shaitān*], the cleansing of the heart from all creatures whatsoever, and equal indifference to praise or blame, to receiving gifts or having them withheld, and to the hard life of the desert [*ḥajar*] or the comfort of civilized living [*madar*].

The first stage of this business is bearing witness that there is none worthy of worship except Allāh [*shahādatu an lā ilāha illaʾllāh*], and the last is equal indifference to rough or civilized living. When a person’s heart is sound, he is so closely connected with his Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He) that desert and town, praise and blame, sickness and good health, riches and poverty, worldly success and failure are all on an equal footing as far as he is concerned.

When someone has genuinely reached this stage, he experiences the death of his lower self [*nafs*] and his passions [*hawā*], his natural urges cease to flare up, and his devil becomes humbly submissive to him. This world and its lords [*arbāb*] become insignificant to his heart, while the

hereafter and its lords acquire great importance in its sight. Then he turns away from both these worlds and moves toward his Master (Almighty and Glorious is He). His heart finds a track in the midst of creatures [*khalq*], on which it can pass through to the Truth [*Haqq*]. They step aside for him to right and left, pull back and clear the path for him. They run away from the fire of his truthfulness [*sidq*] and the awe-inspiring dignity of his innermost being [*sirr*]. Now he is called great in the spiritual kingdom [*malakūt*]. All creatures are under the feet of his heart and find protection in his shade.

You are not rightly guided. You lay claim to that which does not belong to you, and to what you do not possess. Your lower self [*nafs*] is in control of you, and creatures and all of this world are in your heart. In your heart they are greater than Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He). You are outside the limit of the people [of the Lord] and their estimation. If you wish to attain to what I have hinted at, you must devote your attention to the purification of your heart from all things.

Woe unto you! You need a bite to eat, you lose some trivial little thing, or you suffer an insult to your honor—and it is the end of the world for you! You protest against Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He). You vent your rage by beating your wife and children. You curse your religion [*dīn*] and your Prophet [*nabī*]. If you were a sensible person, one of the people of wakefulness and vigilant awareness, you would hold your tongue in the presence of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He). You would look upon all of His actions [*aḥ'āl*] as a blessing for your benefit and in your interest.

**You must always remember the hunger of those who are starving, the nakedness of those who have no clothes to wear, the sickness of those who are ill, and the plight of those who are locked up in prison, for then you will attach far less importance to your own trials and tribulations. You must remember the foreknowledge that Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) has about you, His interest in your welfare, and the destiny [*sābiqa*] He has foreordained for you, for then you feel a sense of shame in His presence. When things become very difficult for you, you must reflect on your sins, turn from them in repentance, and say to your own lower self [*nafs*]: “Because of your sinfulness, the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He) has made life difficult for you. If you repent your sins and do your duty, the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He) will grant**

you a way out of every care and every difficult hardship. As He has said (Almighty and Glorious is He):

And whenever someone observes his duty to Allāh, Allāh will prepare a way out for him. And He will provide for him from sources he could never imagine. And whoever puts all his trust in Allāh, He will suffice him. (65:2,3)<sup>53</sup>

The sensible person is one who is truly honest, and who is readily distinguished from the liars because of his honesty [*sidq*]. You must put truthfulness in the place of dishonesty, steadfastness in the place of shying away, forward progress in the place of backsliding, patient endurance in the place of anxious worry, thankfulness in the place of ingratitude, cheerful acceptance in the place of discontent, compliance in the place of protest, and certainty in the place of doubt. If you are ready to comply and raise no protest, if you are thankful and not at all ungrateful, if you are easily pleased and not disgruntled, and if you feel sure and have no doubts:

Surely Allāh will suffice His servant? (39:36)<sup>54</sup>

All that you are now engaged in and involved with is crazy foolishness. Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) pays no attention to it. This business does not come about through the actions of the physical body. Our Prophet Muḥammad (Allāh bless him and give him peace) used to say:

Abstinence [*zuhd*] is in here. Pious devotion [*taqwā*] is in here. Sincerity [*ikhlās*] is in here.

—and he would be pointing at his breast.

If someone wishes for success [*falāḥ*], let him become a piece of ground beneath the feet of the Shaikhs. What is the character of these Shaikhs? They are those who give up this world and creatures, who bid them farewell, who say goodbye to everything below the heavenly Throne [*‘arsh*] down to the surface of the earth, who leave all things behind and bid them the farewell of one who will never be coming back to them again. They say goodbye to all creatures, including their own selves. Their existence [*wujūd*] is together with their Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He)

<sup>53</sup> *wa man yattaqi ‘llāba yaf’al labu makbrajā—wa yarzuqhu min ḥaithu lā yaḥtasib: wa man yatawakkal ‘ala ‘llābi fa-Huwa ḥasbub.*

<sup>54</sup> *a-laisa ‘llābu bi-Kāfin ‘abdab.* The translation: “Will not Allāh defend His servant?” is also acceptable.



in all their states [*aḥwāl*]. If anyone seeks the love of the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He) together with the existence of his own self [*nafs*], he is indulging in delusion and fantasy.

When a person is completely genuine in his abstinence and his affirmation of Divine Unity, he sees neither the hands of creatures nor their very existence. He sees no giver apart from the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He), and he sees no gracious benefactor apart from Him.

How great is your need, O people of this world! How badly you all need to listen to these words! How great is your need, O you who would abstain from ignorance! How badly you all need to listen to these words! The majority of those who behave like ascetics [*mutazabbidūn*] and devout worshippers [*muta'abbidūn*] are actually the slaves of creatures, whom they treat as if they were partners of Allāh [*musbrikūna bibim*].

O you who are sincerely devoted to the Lord, without attributing any partner to Him [*shirk*], you must draw near to the door of your Lord and take your stand beside it. You must not try to run away when dire misfortunes loom. When you have taken your stand at His door, and disasters threaten to overtake you from your rear, you must cling fast to the door, for then they will be warded off from you by your affirmation of Divine Unity [*tawḥīd*] and the awe-inspiring quality of your truthfulness. Whenever dire misfortunes threaten to overtake you, you must therefore practice patience and steadfastness, along with the recitation of His words (Almighty and Glorious is He):

And Allāh confirms those who believe with a firm saying in the life of this world and in the hereafter. (14:27)<sup>55</sup>

And Allāh will provide you with sufficient defence against them. He is the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing. (2:137)<sup>56</sup>

Surely Allāh will defend His servant. (39:36)<sup>57</sup>

You must also make it your frequent practice to repeat the words [of the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace)]:

There is no power and no strength except through Allāh, the High, the Almighty [*lā ḥawla wa-lā quwwata illā bi'llāhi 'l-'Alīyyi 'l-'Aẓīm*].

<sup>55</sup> *yutbabbitu 'llāhu 'lladbīna āmanū bi'l-qawli 'tb-thābiti fi 'l-ḥayāti 'd-dunyā wa fi 'l-ākbara.*

<sup>56</sup> *fa-sa-yakfīkabumu 'llāh : wa Huwa 's-Samī'u 'l-'Alīm.*

<sup>57</sup> *a-laisa 'llāhu bi-Kāfīn 'abdab.*

You must persevere in begging forgiveness [*istighfār*], proclaiming the glory [*tasbīḥ*] of the Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He), and remembering Him with honest sincerity [*ṣidq*]. If you do all this, you will be quite safe from the army of disasters, as well as from the armed forces of the lower selves [*nufūs*], passionate desires [*hawā*] and the devil [*shaiṭān*].

How often do I try to make you realize, but still you do not get the point?

He whom Allāh guides, he is indeed the one who is guided aright. (7:178)<sup>58</sup>

He whom Allāh allows to go astray, for him there is indeed no guide. (7:186)<sup>59</sup>

And he whom Allāh guides aright, for him there can be no misleader. (39:37)<sup>60</sup>

Our Prophet Muḥammad (Allāh bless him and give him peace) kept wishing that those who had gone astray could receive right guidance [*hidāya*], and he longed for this so eagerly that Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) revealed to him by inspiration [*awḥā ilaih*]:

You do not guide whomever you like, but Allāh guides whomever He wills. (28:56)<sup>61</sup>

It was then that he said (Allāh bless him and give him peace):

I have been sent to offer right guidance, but [the acceptance of] right guidance has nothing to do with me. And Iblis provides temptation, but deviation from the right path has nothing to do with him.<sup>62</sup>

It is the firm belief [*i'tiqād*] of those who follow the Book of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) and the Sunna of His Messenger (Allāh bless him and give him peace) that the sword does not cut because of its nature [*ṭab*], but that it is Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) who cuts with it; that fire does not burn because of its nature, but that Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) is the One who uses it to burn; that food does not satisfy hunger because of its nature, but that Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) uses it to satisfy our hunger; that water does not quench thirst because of

<sup>58</sup> *man yabdi 'llābu fa-buwa 'l-muḥtadī.*

<sup>59</sup> *man yuḍlilī 'llābu fa-lā ḥādīya lah.*

<sup>60</sup> *wa man yabdi 'llābu fa-mā labu min muḍill.*

<sup>61</sup> *innaka lā ṭabḍī man aḥbabta wa lākinna 'llāba yabḍī man yashā'.*

<sup>62</sup> *bu'itbu bi'l-bidāyati wa laisa ilayya minā 'l-bidāyati shai'—wa agḥwā Iblisu wa laisa ilaibi minā 'd-dalālati shai'.*

its nature, but that Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) is the One who quenches our thirst with it. Likewise with all material means in the variety of their forms, Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) is the One who controls and applies them, while they are merely instruments in His hands, with which He does whatever He will.

When Abraham, the Special Friend of Allāh [*Ibrāhīm al-Khalīl*] (blessing and peace be upon him) was cast into the fiery furnace, and the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He) did not wish him to be scorched by its heat, He imposed upon it a state of coolness and peace.<sup>63</sup> We know, from an authentic tradition [*khābar ṣaḥīḥ*] that has been handed down to us, that the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) once said:

On the Day of Resurrection, the Fire of Hell will say: “Pass through, O believer [*mu’min*], for your light has extinguished my flames!”

The slave may need to be beaten with a stick, but a nod is enough to tell the free man what is required of him.

O servants of Allāh, you must faithfully observe the five daily prayers [*aṣ-ṣalawāt al-khams*] at their appointed times. You must perform them with all their preconditions [*sharā’iṭ*] and all their essential elements [*arkān*]. You must never perform them negligently. Surely you must have heard the words of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He):

So woe unto those who pray, but who are heedless of their prayers. (107:4,5)<sup>64</sup>

Ibn ‘Abbās (may Allāh be well pleased with him and his father) once remarked [to explain the seeming paradox]: “By Allāh! It is not that they omit them altogether, but rather that they postpone them beyond their appointed times.”

Repent, for Allāh will then bestow His mercy upon you. And be truly devoted to your duty once you have been rewarded for your repentance. Turn in repentance from your misbehavior in the past. Repent, all of you who have postponed the prayer beyond its appointed time. O you who adopt the false interpretation [*ta’wīl*] and the deceptive arguments put

<sup>63</sup> An allusion to the Qur’ānic verse [*āya*] in which Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) gives the command:

O fire, be coolness and peace for Abraham [*yā nāru kūnī bardan wa salāman ‘alā Ibrāhīm*]. (21:69)

<sup>64</sup> *fa-wailun li’l-muṣallīn—alladhbīna hum ‘an ṣalātibim sābūn.*

forward by Satan! O you who let yourselves be duped by his treacherous devices! Do not suppose yourselves to be immune to the punishment of the Fire of Hell. Do not be deceived, for you may be punished even here in this world—with blindness, deafness and chronic illness, with poverty accompanied by a lack of patience to endure it, and with dependence on other people at a time when their hearts are hardened toward you—and then in the hereafter with the Fire of Hell. All of these agonies are the evil outcome of acts of disobedience and sinful errors. Let us take refuge with Allāh from His vengeance, His chastisement, His violent rage and His wrath!

O Allāh, pardon us and treat us with Your clemency [*ḥilm*] and Your noble generosity [*karam*], not with Your justice [*‘adl*]! Grant us the blessing of compliance with Your will! Āmīn.

The Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) is reported as having said:

Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) has created tormenting angels [*zabāniya*] within the Fire of Hell. They serve Allāh by inflicting vengeance on His enemies, the unbelievers. So, when He wishes to chastise an unbeliever [*kāfir*], He says to them: “Seize him!” Seventy thousand of them immediately rush toward that unbeliever, and as soon as he falls into the hands of one of them, he melts like fat in the fire, so that nothing is left on his body but the dripping [*wadak*]. Then Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) restores his normal constitution to him, whereupon they proceed to bind him with shackles and chains of fire, tying his head and his feet together. Then they hurl him unto the Fire of Hell.



The Shaikh (may Allāh be well pleased with him) went on to say, in response to a question someone put to him about notions [*khawāṭir*]:

How to explain to you what notions are? Your notions come from the devil [*shaitān*], natural impulses [*ṭabʿ*], the passions [*hawā*] and this world. Your interest or concern [*ḥamm*] is whatever is most important to you

[*abammaka*]. Your notions correspond in kind to your interest while it is active. A notion [*kbātir*] inspired by the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He) comes only to the heart, free from anything apart from Him. As He has said:

Allāh forbid that we should seize anyone except him with whom we found our property. (12:79)<sup>65</sup>

If Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) and His remembrance [*dhikr*] are present with you, your heart will certainly be filled with His nearness, and the notions suggested by the devil, the passions and this world will all avoid your company. There is a kind of notion belonging to this world, and a notion belonging to the hereafter. There is a notion belonging to the angels, a notion belonging to the lower self [*nafs*], and a notion belonging to the heart. There is also a notion belonging to the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He). It is therefore necessary for you, O truthful one [*ṣādiq*], to get rid of all those other notions and to rely on the notion of the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He). If you reject the notion of the lower self, the notion of the passions, the devil's notion and the notion of this world, the notion of the hereafter will come to you. Then you will receive the angel's notion, then finally the notion of the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He). This is the ultimate stage.

**O my people! The Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He) bestows His blessings upon you so that He may see whether you will be thankful or ungrateful, whether you will acknowledge or deny, whether you will obey or disobey.**

You should not feel too happy about a situation where you bask in public applause while your faults remain concealed. Disgrace will come sooner or later to someone who says: "O Allāh, you have given me more than I deserve, and you have spread my fame and reputation far and wide among the people. O Allāh, do not disgrace me in their presence at the Resurrection [*Qiyāma*], for I have a hidden fault [*'aib mastūr*] and popular approval [*thanā' manshūr*]." Nothing will fall into your hand from the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He) because of your hypocrisy [*nifāq*], your smooth talk and your eloquence, making your face look pale, stitching patches on your tattered cloak, hunching your shoulders and pretending to weep. All that stuff comes from your lower self [*nafs*], your devil, your idolatrous attitude [*shirk*] to creatures and trying to gain worldly advantage from them.

<sup>65</sup> *mā'ādha 'llāhi an na'kbudha illā man wajadnā matā'anā 'indahu.*

**You should think well of other people and have a poor opinion of yourself.** You must look down on your lower self [*naḥs*] and exercise restraint. Keep this up until you are told: “Speak about the blessings of your Lord!” The son of Simeon [*Sham’ūn*](may the mercy of Allāh be upon him) used to say, whenever he received a charismatic gift [*karāma*]: “This is a deception. This is from the devil [*shaiṭān*].” He kept on doing this until he was told: “Who are you, and who is your father? Speak about Our blessings upon you!”

**O lovers! O seekers! Beware of losing the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He), for if you lose Him you have lost everything. Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) revealed to Jesus (blessing and peace be upon him) by way of inspiration: “O Jesus, beware of losing Me, for if you lose Me you have lost everything, and if you do not lose Me you have not lost anything.”**

Moses (peace be upon him) said to his Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He) in the course of his intimate conversation [*munājāt*] with Him: “O my Lord, advise me!” So He said in reply: “I advise you to trust in Me and to seek Me.” This exchange was repeated four times, with the same request being made and the same reply being given each time. The Lord did not tell him to seek this world, nor to seek the hereafter. It was as if he were telling him: “I advise you to obey Me and give up disobeying Me. I advise you to seek My nearness. I advise you to affirm My Unity [*tawḥīdī*] and to work for My sake. I advise you to turn away from everything apart from Me.”

**O you poor beggars, you must bear your poverty with patience, for then affluence will come to you both in this world and in the hereafter. The Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) is reported as having said:**

Poverty and patience are the boon companions [*julasā’*] of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) on the Day of Resurrection, and the poor and those who endure with patience are the boon companions of the All-Merciful [*ar-Raḥmān*] (Almighty and Glorious is He), with their hearts today and with their bodies tomorrow.

As for the poor whose need is for the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He), and those who are patient with Him and indifferent to all others, their hearts are calm and subservient in His presence. They pay

attention to no one other than Him. With them, it is just as Allāh (Exalted is He) said to Moses (blessing and peace be upon him):

And we had forbidden foster-mothers to him before then. (28:12)<sup>66</sup>

When the heart is sound and really knows [*‘arafa*] the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He), it refuses to acknowledge any other. It finds intimate friendship with Him and feels estranged from all others. It feels at ease in His company and uncomfortable with anyone besides Him.

**O my people! You must remember death and what lies beyond it. You must give up the greedy desire to accumulate things belonging to this transitory world. You must curtail your expectations and diminish your greedy ambitions. There is nothing worse for you than exaggerated expectation and greedy ambition. The Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) is reported as having said:**

When the human being [*ibn Ādam*] dies and enters his grave, four angels come to the edge of his grave. One angel stands beside his head, one angel stands to his right, one angel stands to his left, and one angel stands at his feet. Then the one who is standing beside his head will say: “O son of Adam, gone are the possessions [*amwāl*] and only the deeds [*‘a māl*] remain.” The one who is standing to his right will say: “O son of Adam, the deadlines [*‘ajāl*] have expired and only the hopes [*āmāl*] remain.” The one who is standing to his left will say: “O son of Adam, the pleasures of the flesh [*shahawāt*] are over and only the dreary hardships [*‘a‘abāt*] remain. The one who is standing at his feet will say: “O son of Adam, congratulations to you, if you earned your livelihood by lawful means [*ḥalāl*] and freely gave to charity!”

**O my people! You must learn your lessons from these exhortations [*mawā‘iz*], especially the exhortations of Allāh (Exalted is He) and the exhortations of His Messengers (Allāh’s blessing and peace be upon them all). O Allāh! Bear witness for me that I am doing my utmost in delivering exhortations [*mawā‘iz*] to Your servants, making every effort for the sake of their well-being.**

O you hermits and recluses, come here and get a taste of my words, be it only a single letter! Spend a day or a week in my company, and maybe you will learn something that will bring you benefit. The majority of you are governed by a delusion within a delusion, worshipping creatures in your cells [*sawāmi’*]. This business is not something that comes about merely through sitting in secluded places [*khalawāt*] with ignorance for company. You must walk forth in search of knowledge [*‘ilm*] and scholars

<sup>66</sup> *wa ḥarramnā ‘alaibi ‘l-marāḍi‘a min qablu.*

who put their knowledge into practice [*'ulamā' 'ummāl*], until you can walk no farther. You must keep walking until your legs will no longer obey you. Then, when you have no strength left, you may sit down. Travel with your outer [*zāhir*], then with your heart and your inner content [*ma'nā*]. When you are utterly exhausted both outwardly and inwardly [*bāṭinan*] and have to stop, nearness to Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) and attainment to Him will come to you.

Not a chirp can be heard from you as long as you are still a chicken inside an egg. You have no faculty of speech until your natural constitution is fully formed, your egg has cracked open to release you, and you have come to be a chicken beneath the wing of your mother hen, beneath the wing of the sacred law [*sharī'a*] of your Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace), so that you can be given nourishment and so that your faith can grow to perfection. Once you have received the proper training, you will gather sustenance from the gracious favor of your Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He). Having reached this stage, you will become a rooster for the hens. You will entertain them and treat them with love. You will become a guardian who takes care of them. You will try to shield them from disasters, ready to sacrifice yourself on their behalf. When the servant [of Allāh] is truly worthy, he bears the burdens of his fellow creatures and assumes a pivotal rôle for their benefit [*ṣāra quṭban lahum*].<sup>67</sup>

The Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) is reported as having said:

If someone learns [*ta' allama*], practices [*'amala*] and teaches [*'allama*], he will be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven [*malakūt*].

I shall be echoing the words of the Commander of the Believers [*Amīr al-Mu'minīn*], 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (may Allāh be well pleased with him, and may He ennoble his countenance), when I say that I have within me

<sup>67</sup> These words of Shaikh 'Abd al-Qādir (may Allāh be well pleased with him) are reminiscent of the following passage in the Fifty-first Discourse of *The Sublime Revelation [al-Faṭḥ ar-Rabbānī]* (see p. 333 of the translation published by Al-Baz):

There is nothing to be said until your affirmation of Divine Unity [*tauhīd*] stands erect and steady in the presence of the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He), until you hatch from the egg of your existence [*wujūd*], sit in the lap of grace, come under the wing of His intimate friendship [*uns*], peck the seed of sincerity [*ikhlās*] and drink the water of direct experience [*mushābada*]. Then you will remain in this state until you become a rooster [*dik*]. At this point you will become a guardian for the hens, loving them with selfless devotion, and a muezzin [*mu'adhabīn*] who arouses people from sleep by night and by day, alerting them to the obedient service of their Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He).



a store of knowledge, which—if only I could find people fit to carry it—I would gladly disseminate. If only I could find the right qualifications in you, I would not keep the door of the mysteries [*asrār*] locked. I would open their doors and throw away their keys. But I must advise you to safeguard what you have in your keeping. Then, if someone asks you for it, you may disclose as much of it as possible. You must not reveal everything that you have in your keeping, because there is a part of one's spiritual state [*ḥāl*] that should remain a secret. The son of Simeon [*Ibn Sham'ūn*] (may the mercy of Allāh the Exalted be upon him) used to say: "Faith is a province of the Empire [*al-īmān wilāya*], and anyone who sets foot in it is there on a visitor's visa."

Words like these are spoken, believed, and put into practice only by someone who serves the Law [*ḥukm*], acts in accordance with it, and obeys it sincerely. This is the Book and the Sunna. Successful—by Allāh!—is he who receives his education from them, grows to maturity in them, and never oversteps their bounds. Successful indeed is he!

Your Islām and your faith [*īmān*] must not be merely borrowed imitations. To make sure of this you need to be constant in your fear [of displeasing your Lord], your fasting [*ṣawm*], your prayers [*ṣalawāt*] and your sleepless vigil. This is why the people [of the Lord] have sometimes gone wandering in the wilderness, joining up with wild animals and competing with them for the herbs [*ḥashā'ish*] of the earth and the water of the creeks, while the sun became their awning and their lamps were the moon and the planets [*kawākib*].

You must make a really serious effort to perform the duties of obedience [*tā'āt*] and deeds of righteousness [*qurubāt*] before you arrive in His presence. Do not wrong your own selves through your sinful disobedience and your insolent attitude toward Him.

O Allāh, help us to obey You, keep us from disobedience toward You, and:

Give us in this world good, and good in the hereafter, and guard us against the torment of the fire! (2:201)<sup>68</sup>



<sup>68</sup> *ātina fi 'd-dunyā ḥasanatan wa fi 'l-ākhirati ḥasanatan wa qinā 'adbāba 'n-nār.*

## The Sixth Discourse <sup>69</sup>

**Y**ou really ought to desist from so much frivolous talk and gossip and wasting money. Do not spend too much time in the company of neighbors, friends and acquaintances without good reason, for this is foolish. Most of what passes between two people is telling lies and backbiting [*ghība*], and it takes two to stage a sinful revolt. None of you should go out of the house except to attend to your own essential interests or those of your family. Do make the effort not to be the first to speak, but rather let your words be a response to someone who asks you about something—provided there is some mutual benefit to be gained by responding to him, otherwise you should not answer his question. **If you happen to meet a Muslim brother of yours, do not ask him: “Where are you heading for now, and where are you coming from?”** Perhaps he does not want to tell you what he is up to, in which case he may lie about it, and then you will be the one to blame for prompting him to tell a lie.

Be reticent in the presence of the Recording Angels [*al-Kirām al-Kātibīn*],<sup>70</sup> and do not dictate statements to them which you ought not to be making. You should not dictate anything for them to record, unless it is something you can be truly happy to relate. Your dictation to them should consist of the glorification of the Lord [*tasbīḥ*], the recitation of the Qur’ān, and statements concerning your own best interests and the best interests of your fellow creatures. Wash away their ink with your tears, and blunt their pens with your affirmation of Divine Unity [*tawḥīd*]. Then leave them sitting at the door, while you go inside to enter the presence of your Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He).

<sup>69</sup> The passages printed in ordinary (non-bold) Jilani font are also to be found—with only minor differences almost entirely explicable as due to mistakes by the copyist of *Jalā’ al-Khawāṭir*—in the Sixty-first Discourse of Shaikh ‘Abd al-Qādir’s work *The Sublime Revelation* [*al-Faṭḥ ar-Rabbānī*]. (See pp. 420–25 of the translation published by Al-Baz.)

<sup>70</sup> An allusion to the verses [*āyāt*] of the Qur’ān in which Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) has said:

And yet over you there are watchers, Noble Recorders, who know whatever you do [*wa inna ‘alaikum la-ḥāfiẓīn —Kirāman Kātibīn —ya‘lamūna mā taf’alūn*]. (82:10–12)

You should always hold death as a marker in front of your eyes. If one of you happens to see his brother, he should take his leave of him and bid him farewell. The same rule applies whenever someone goes away from his house. He should bid farewell to his family with his heart, for it may be that the messenger of death [*rasūl al-mawt*] will summon him, and it will not be possible for him to go back home to them again. It may be that his final moment [*ajal*] will meet him on the road. This is why the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) has said:

None of you should ever go to sleep without having his last will and testament [*waṣiyya*] recorded in writing and placed under his head.

If there is anyone amongst you owes a debt, and who is capable of repaying it, he should make the repayment at once and not postpone the settlement, for he cannot know whether or not he will have another opportunity to pay it off. If someone is capable of settling his debt, yet does not make the repayment while he can, that person must be a tyrant [*ẓālim*], since the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) has said:

To delay repayment unnecessarily is a form of tyranny [*ẓulm*].

The people [of the Lord] are accustomed to exercising patience in the face of misfortune, and they do not get upset by the kind of disturbance that bothers you. Trials and tribulations are of various types. Some of them affect the physical constitution, while others affect the heart. Some of them are experienced in relation to creatures and others in relation to the Creator. There is no good in a person who has never had to suffer. Trials and tribulations are the grappling hooks of the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He).

The eager longing of the abstinent worshipper [*ʿābid zāhid*] is for charismatic gifts [*karāmāt*] in this world and for the gardens [of Paradise] in the hereafter. The eager longing of the knower [*ʿārif*] is for his faith [*īmān*] to remain intact in this world, and for salvation [*khalāṣ*] from the Fire of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) in the hereafter. His eager longing and desire for this will not cease until his heart is told: "What is this? Be confident and steadfast. Faith is firmly established in you. From you the believers [*mu'minūn*] can obtain a light for their own faith, and tomorrow you will be a successful intercessor [*mushaffāʾ*], whose word is accepted. You will be the cause of salvation from the Fire of Hell for many people.

You will be in the presence of your Prophet, he who is the chief of the intercessors [*sayyid ash-shāfiʿīn*]. This is not something you need to be concerned about.”

Here we have a sealed declaration [*tawqīʿ*] to the effect that he is permanently assured of faith [*īmān*], knowledge [*maʿrifā*] and safety [*salāma*] in the afterlife [*ʿāqiba*], and of walking in the company of the Prophets [*nabiyyūn*], the Messengers [*mursalūn*] and the champions of the truth [*ṣiddiqūn*], they who are the élite [*khawāṣṣ*] among creatures.

Surely no prayer [*daʿwa*] of yours will be answered, and there can be no place for you in the hearts of the champions of truth [*ṣiddiqūn*]. Allāh has let you go knowingly astray. Once the dust has cleared away, you will see whether that is a horse underneath you, or a donkey. Once the dust has cleared, you will see the men of the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He) riding fine horses and camels, while you are behind them on a broken donkey, falling into the clutches of corrupt Satans [*shayāṭīn*] and devils [*abālisa*].

The people [of the Lord] attain to a condition in which they no longer have any prayer of supplication [*duʿāʾ*] or request [*suʾāl*] to make. They do not beg [in their prayers] to gain advantages, nor to get rid of disadvantages. Their supplication comes to be a matter concerning their hearts, sometimes for their own sake and sometimes for the sake of all creatures, so they utter the prayer of supplication without conscious premeditation [*fī ghaiba*].

O Allāh, endow us with good behavior in Your company under all circumstances, **and:**

**Give us in this world good, and good in the hereafter, and guard us against the torment of the fire! (2:201)<sup>71</sup>**



<sup>71</sup> *ātina fi ʿd-dunyā ḥasanatan wa fi ʿl-ākhirati ḥasanatan wa qina ʿadbāba ʿn-nār.*

## The Seventh Discourse <sup>72</sup>

**A**llāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) causes them to live in well-being [*‘āfiya*], He causes them to die in well-being, and He will reassemble them in well-being on the Day of Resurrection. They are the people who are content to accept the decree of destiny [*ahl ar-riḍā bi’l-qadā’*], who turn in repentance toward the fulfillment of His promise (Exalted is He) and who are fearful of His threat. O Allāh, let us be included among them! *Āmīn*.

The people [of the Lord] work day and night in the worshipful service of the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He), and their attitude is one of fear and caution, for they are afraid of a bad outcome. They were ignorant of the foreknowledge [*‘ilm*] of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) about them and the outcome of their business, so they spent their days and nights in sorrow and sadness and weeping. As well as faithfully performing the prayer [*ṣalāt*], the fast [*ṣiyām*], the pilgrimage [*ḥajj*] and all other acts of obedience, they remembered their Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He) with their hearts and their tongues, so when they reached the hereafter they entered the Garden of Paradise and saw the face of the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He) and His generous favor toward them. They praised Him in gratitude for this,

And they said: “Praise be to Allāh who has put grief away from us.” (35:34)<sup>73</sup>

When you have firmly established your faith [*īmān*], you will reach the valley of extinction [*fanā’*] to you and to all creatures.<sup>74</sup> Then you will come

<sup>72</sup> The passages printed in ordinary (non-bold) Jilani font are also to be found—with only minor differences almost entirely explicable as due to mistakes by the copyist of *Jalā’ al-Khawāṭir*—in the Sixty-first Discourse of Shaikh ‘Abd al-Qādir’s work *The Sublime Revelation [al-Faṭḥ ar-Rabbānī]*. (See pp. 429–37 of the translation published by Al-Baz.)

<sup>73</sup> *wa-qālu ‘l-ḥamdu li’llāhi ‘l-ladhi adbbaba ‘anna ‘l-ḥazan*.

<sup>74</sup> As recorded in the Sixty-first Discourse of *The Sublime Revelation [al-Faṭḥ ar-Rabbānī]* (p. 429 of the Al-Baz edition), the Shaikh (may Allāh be well pleased with him) said:

When you have firmly established your faith [*īmān*], you will reach the abode of experience [*ma’rifā*], then the valley of knowledge [*‘ilm*], then the valley of extinction [*fanā’*] to you and to all creatures.

to existence [*wujūd*] through Him, not through you and not through them. At this stage your grief will disappear, for preservation will serve you, protection will surround you, helpful guidance [*taufiq*] will stand respectfully before you, the angels will walk around you, the spirits [*arwāh*] will come forward to salute you, and the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He) will proudly display you to His creatures. His attentive glances will watch over you and draw you toward the abode of His nearness and intimate friendship [*uns*] and conversation [*munājāt*] with Him.

**O disobedient sinners! Turn in repentance from your sinful disobedience, for your Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He) is All-Forgiving [*Ghafūr*], All-Compassionate [*Rahīm*]. He accepts repentance from His servants. He forgives their sins and wipes them away. You must say with your hearts and your tongues: “O Allāh, to You we repent of every sin and every mistake; we shall not go back to committing them again.”**

Our Lord! Do not condemn us if we forget, or miss the mark! (2:286)<sup>75</sup>

Our Lord! Do not cause our hearts to go astray after You have guided us! (3:8)<sup>76</sup>

**O You who are Ever-Forgiving [*Ghaffār*] of sins, forgive us! O Veiler of faults [*Sattār*], draw a veil over us and draw a veil over our shortcomings!**

Seek forgiveness of Him, for He (Exalted is He) forgives our sins. He accepts our good deeds graciously, however few they may be, and He rewards us for them by giving us something much better in exchange for them, because He is Noble [*Karīm*] and Generous [*Jawād*]. He gives without compensation or cause, so imagine how it would be if we gave Him cause! Your dealings with Him should be based on the affirmation of Divine Unity [*tawhīd*], the performance of righteous deeds [*a‘māl ṣāliha*], detachment from this world, indifference not only to this world but also to the hereafter, the forsaking of sins and lustful pleasures and the strenuous avoidance thereof.

The seeker [*murīd*] of the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He) is not wishing for His Garden of Paradise, nor is he afraid of His Fire of Hell. No, he wishes only for His countenance. He hopes to be near to Him and dreads being distant from Him. As for you, you are the prisoner of the devil

<sup>75</sup> *Rabbanā lā tu‘ākbidnā in nasīnā aw akbṭa’nā.*

<sup>76</sup> *Rabbanā lā tuzigh qulūbanā ba’dā idb badaitanā.*

[*shaiṭān*], the passions [*hawā*], the lower self [*nafs*], this world and the desires of the flesh [*shabawāt*]. But you do not have a clue. Your heart is in shackles and you do not have a clue.

O Allāh, deliver him from his captivity, and deliver us! Āmīn.

**You must keep the fast [*ṣawm*] and perform the five daily prayers [*aṣ-ṣalawāt al-khams*] regularly at their prescribed times, as you must observe all the rules of the sacred law [*ḥudūd ash-sharʿ*]. When you have discharged the obligatory religious duties [*fard*], you should turn your attention to those that are supererogatory [*nafl*].**

You must practice strict observance [*ʿazīma*] and avoid special concessions [*rukhsa*]. When a person always takes advantage of special concessions and gives up strict observance, it is to be feared that he is risking the total loss of his religion [*dīn*]. Strict observance is for grown men, because it is the serious course, the harder and tougher one, while the way of concession is for youngsters and women, since it is the easier course.

You must take your place in the front row, because it is the row of courageous men [*rījāl shujʿān*], and stay away from the back row, because it is the row of cowards. You must put this lower self [*nafs*] to work and make it get used to strict observance, for it should carry whatever you want it to carry. Do not spare the rod, for it is liable to fall asleep and let its burdens drop. Do not show it the white of your teeth and the white of your eyes! It is a bad servant, reluctant to do any work unless it gets the stick. Do not allow it to eat its fill, unless you know for sure that having a full belly will not make it turn mischievous, and that it will work in exchange for having its appetite satisfied.

Sufyān ath-Thawrī<sup>77</sup> (may the mercy of Allāh be upon him) was given to much work of pious obedience [*tāʿa*] and also to much eating. When he

<sup>77</sup> Abū ʿAbdullāh Sufyān ibn Saʿīd ath-Thawrī was born in Kūfa in A.H. 97/715 C.E. He founded a school of Islāmic jurisprudence [*fiqh*] which survived for about two centuries after his death in Baṣra in A.H. 161/778 C.E. Shaikh ʿAbd al-Qādir (may Allāh be well pleased with him) clearly held him in very high regard, as witness the following passage from the Twenty-fourth Discourse of *The Sublime Revelation [al-Faṭḥ ar-Rabbānī]*:

A certain wise man (may the mercy of Allāh be upon him) is reported as having said: "I saw Sufyān ath-Thawrī (may the mercy of Allāh be upon him) in a dream, after his death, so I said to him: 'What has Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) done with you?' He said: 'He has put one of my feet on the Bridge [*ṣirāṭ*] and the other in Paradise.'" May Allāh's peace be upon him, for he was a pious and ascetic jurist [*faqīh*], who acquired knowledge and put it into practice. He gave knowledge its due by practicing it, and he gave practice its due by doing it with sincerity. The Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He) gave him His approval for aspiring to Him, and the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) gave him his approval for following him. May the mercy of Allāh be upon him and upon all of the righteous, and upon us along with them.

Another story about Sufyān ath-Thawrī (may the mercy of Allāh be upon him) is told in the Twenty-second Discourse of *Jalāl ʿal-Khawāṭir* (see p. 128 below).

had eaten his fill, he would coin the analogy: “Give the slave [*zanjī*] as much as he can eat, and make him work flat out. The slave is just a donkey.” Then he would set about his worshipful service [*ibāda*] and take a plentiful helping of that.

A certain righteous man is reported as having said: “I saw Sufyān ath-Thawrī eating so much that I was disgusted at him. Then he prayed [*ṣallā*] and wept so much that I felt compassion for him.”

You should not try to emulate Sufyān’s capacity for all that eating, but do follow his example where his great capacity for worshipful obedience is concerned. For you are not Sufyān. Do not satisfy your lower self as he used to satisfy his, for you are not in control of it as he was in control of his lower self.

When the heart is truly sound, it becomes a tree with branches, leaves and fruit. It comes to contain benefits for all creatures, whether they be humans or jinn or angels.

When there is no soundness in the heart, it is like the hearts of animals, an outer form with no inner content, a vessel with nothing to fill it, a tree without fruit, **a stone without a ring** [*faṣṣ bi-lā khātam*], a cage without a bird, a house with no one living in it, a treasure chest holding a store of dirhams [silver coins], dīnārs [gold coins] and jewels but with no one to distribute them, a body without a spirit [*rūḥ*], like those bodies that were transmuted into stones because they had form but no content. The heart that rejects Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), disbelieving [*kāfir*] in Him, is subject to metamorphosis [*mamsūkh*]. This is why Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) has likened it to a stone, for He has said:

Then your hearts were hardened, even after that, and became like rocks or even harder still. (2:74)<sup>78</sup>

When the Children of Israel failed to put the Torah [*Tawrāh*] into practice, Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) transmuted their hearts into stones and banished them from His door. The same could happen to you, O Muḥammadans [*yā Muḥammadiyyīn*]/! If you do not put the Qur’ān into practice and do not master its laws [*ahkām*], He may transmute your hearts and banish them from His door. Do not be among those whom Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) has allowed to go knowingly astray. If you acquire knowledge for the sake of creatures, you will work for the sake of creatures, and if you acquire knowledge for the sake of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) you will work for His sake.

<sup>78</sup> *thumma qasat qulūbukum min ba’di dbālika fa-biya ka-l-ḥijāratī aw ashaddu qaswa.*



Worshipful obedience [*ʔāʿa*] is the work of the Garden of Paradise, while sinful disobedience [*maʿṣiya*] is the work of the Fire of Hell. After that, the matter is up to Him. If He so wills, He may reward one of us without reference to work, or He may chastise one of us without reference to work. This is all up to Him for Allāh is:

Doer of whatever He wishes. (11:107)<sup>79</sup>

He shall not be questioned as to what He does, but they shall be questioned. (21:23)<sup>80</sup>

The champion of truth [*ṣiddīq*] sees by the light of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), not by the light of his own two eyes, nor by the light of the sun and the moon. This is the general light of Allāh, but he also has a special light given to him by Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He). This light comes after mastery of the law [*ihkām al-ḥukm*] and proficiency in it. In other words, he has put the Book and the Sunna into practice, so he is given the light of knowledge [*nūr al-ʿilm*].

O Allāh, grant us the blessings of Your forbearance [*ḥilm*], Your knowledge [*ʿilm*] and Your nearness, **and:**

**Give us in this world good, and good in the hereafter, and guard us against the torment of the fire! (2:201)<sup>81</sup>**



<sup>79</sup> *Faʿālun li-mā yurīd.*

<sup>80</sup> *lā yusʿalu ʿammā yafʿalu wa hum yusʿalūn.*

<sup>81</sup> *ātīnā fi ʿd-dunyā ḥasanatan wa fi ʿl-ākbarati ḥasanatan wa qinā ʿadbāba ʿn-nār.*

## The Eighth Discourse <sup>82</sup>

**T**he Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) is reported as having said:

The sense of shame is part of faith [*al-ḥayā'u minā' l-īmān*].

You folk are so impudent and so insolent in your attitude toward your Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He). To combine modesty toward your fellow creatures [*khalq*] with insolence toward the True Creator [*al-Khāliq al-Ḥaqq*] can only be described as crazy delusion. The real meaning [*ḥaqīqa*] of modesty [*ḥayā'*] is that you feel a sense of shame in relation to your Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He) in both your private moments and your public lives. Modesty toward your fellow creatures is therefore a consequence, not a basic principle. The true believer [*mu'min*] feels a sense of shame in relation to the Creator, while the hypocrite [*munāfiq*] feels a sense of shame in relation to his fellow creatures.

May Allāh not grant you His blessing, O hypocrites, for all too often your whole preoccupation is with cultivating your relations with creatures and sabotaging your relations with the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He).

If you treat me as your enemy, I shall treat you as enemies on behalf of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) and His Messenger, because I count on their support. Do not go beyond the bounds, for Allāh “has the upper hand in His affairs” (12:21).<sup>83</sup> The brothers of Joseph (peace be upon him) tried to kill him, but they were unable to do it. How could they have done it, when he was a king in the sight of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), one of His Prophets [*nabīyyun min anbiyā' ibi*] and one of His champions

<sup>82</sup> The passages printed in ordinary (non-bold) Jilani font are also to be found—with only minor differences almost entirely explicable as due to mistakes by the copyist of *Jalā' al-Khawāṭir*—in the Sixty-first Discourse of Shaikh 'Abd al-Qādir's work *The Sublime Revelation [al-Faṭḥ ar-Rabbānī]*. (See pp. 437–42 of the translation published by Al-Baz.)

<sup>83</sup> *Ghālibun 'alā amribi*.

of the truth [*ṣiddīqun min ṣiddīqībīl*], for whom it was preordained that the people should receive benefits at his hands?

It was like this also in the case of Mary's son Jesus (blessing and peace be upon him). The Jews [*al-Yabūd*] were eager to put him to death, because they became envious of him when marvelous signs [*āyāt*] and miracles [*mu'jizāt*]<sup>84</sup> were manifested through his agency. Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) therefore instructed him by way of inspiration [*awḥā ilaih*] that he should leave his native country and go to the land of Egypt, and so he set out on the journey. He was only thirteen years of age at the time when some of his close relatives took him and helped him to escape. His influence grew strong in that country, and his reputation spread far and wide, so certain people conspired to destroy him, but they were incapable of carrying out their plot and Allāh was Triumphant [*Ghālib*] in His undertaking.

It is the same with you, O hypocrites of this day and age. You would like to destroy me, but you are fit for nothing and your hands are incapable of doing such a deed.

Make the effort to practice acts of worshipful obedience [*ṭā'āt*], and give up acts of sinful disobedience [*ma'āṣī*] and reprehensible behavior [*munkarāt*], then effort-making will become a natural inclination. You must try to understand the words of your Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He), put them into practice and be sincere in your actions.

Our Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He) is One who speaks [*Mutakallim*] with a speech [*kalām*] that is meant to be both heard and understood. His speech was heard in this world by Moses (blessing and peace be upon him) and by our own Prophet Muḥammad (Allāh bless him and give him peace). In the hereafter His speech will be heard by the true believers [*mu'minūn*] among His creatures.

Our Lord is a visible entity [*shai'un yurā*]. We shall see Him tomorrow at the Resurrection [*Qiyāma*], just as the sun and moon can now be seen. There is no doubt that this is a fact today, where these two are concerned, and there is no doubt that it will be a fact tomorrow, where Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) is concerned. There are some among His

<sup>84</sup> The term *mu'jiza* (plural: *mu'jizāt*) is applied to a miracle performed by a Prophet [*nabī*], and is distinguished from the *karāma* performed by a saint [*walī*] or righteous person [*ṣāliḥ*]. As defined by the Islāmic theologians, a *mu'jiza* is "an event at variance with the usual course of nature, produced by one who lays claim to the office of a Prophet, in contending with those who refuse to acknowledge his claim, in such a manner as renders them unable to produce the like thereof." (See: E.W. Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, art. 'J-Z.)

servants who are ready to trade the Garden of Paradise and all that it contains in exchange for a glimpse [of Him]. When He recognizes the genuine sincerity [*ṣidq*] of their intentions [*niyyāt*] in this respect, and that they are truly prepared to make the deal for a single glance, He allows them to enjoy their glances permanently. He lets them enjoy their nearness [to Him] permanently. He grants them His nearness in exchange for the pleasures of the Garden of Paradise.

O you who know so little of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), His Messenger (Allāh bless him and give him peace) and His men of valor! Woe unto you! You must take a step forward with the feet of your hearts, in order to reach the food of the gracious favor of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He). Can you not see how I am laying it in front of you? If there is anyone amongst you who would call me a liar, his own falsehood will be proclaimed by the very clothes he wears, by his own home, and by his angels who are hovering all around him.

It does not bother me to be called a liar by you, O hypocrite [*munāfiq*], O impostor [*dajjāl*]. You are nothing but lower self [*naḥs*], natural inclination [*ṭab*] and passion [*hawā*]. You spend time in the company of strange women and boys, then you say: "I am not interested in them." You are lying. Neither sacred law [*sharʿ*] nor reason [*ʿaql*] will agree with you. You are adding fire to fire, firewood to firewood, so the house of your religion [*dīn*] and your faith [*īmān*] will surely be set ablaze. Disapproval of this by the sacred law is universally applicable, with no one being exempt from it.

You must acquire faith, experience [*maʿrifa*] of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) and the strength of nearness, then become a physician to creatures, acting on behalf of the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He). Woe unto you! How can you touch and handle snakes, when you are not expert in the art of snake-charming and have not taken the antidote [to their poison]? Blind, how can you treat people's eyes? Dumb, how can you teach people? Ignorant, how can you practice the religion [*dīn*]? If someone is not a chamberlain, how can he conduct people to the king's door? **There is nothing more to be said, until the Resurrection comes and you see the wonders.**

You must perform all your deeds with true sincerity, otherwise you should not make any claim for yourself. When you have severed all attachment, and closed all doors and avenues, the direction of the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He) and His nearness will be opened unto you. The path to Him will be paved for you, and the loftiest, the finest and the noblest of things will come your way.

This world is fleeting, transitory. It is the abode of disasters and misfortunes. It can offer no one a life free of care, especially if he is a wise man [*ḥakīm*]. As the saying goes, it offers no solace for the eye of the wise man, the eye of one who remembers death. If someone finds himself close up against a lion with its jaws wide open, how can he feel nice and cozy and drop off to sleep? O heedless ones, the grave has its jaws open wide. The lion of death and its serpent have their jaws open wide. The executioner of the Sultan of Destiny [*qadar*] has his sword in his hand, as he awaits the command. Only one in a million has this kind of wisdom [*ḥikma*], vigilant without a trace of negligence.

**The fully conscious individual [*mustaiqiz*] is detached from everything. He says: “My God [*Ilāhī*], You know very well that I do not want these dishes which You have bestowed upon Your creatures. I long for a morsel from the tray of Your nearness. I wish for something that is special to You.”**

O you who idolatrously associate His material means with Him [*yā musbrik bi-sababihī*! If only you could experience eating because of absolute trust, you would not be guilty of idolatrous association. You would sit at His door, trusting in Him and relying upon Him. As far as I am aware, there are only two ways of getting food and drink: either through working to earn them, while observing the requirements of the sacred law [*sharʿ*], or through absolute trust [in the Lord].

Woe unto you! Are you not embarrassed in the presence of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He)? You give up the effort to earn your living and you go begging from other people. Earning is a starting point and absolute trust is a final stage, so I do not see you having either a beginning or an end. I am telling you the truth and I can face you without embarrassment. Hear and take heed, and do not quarrel with the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He).

**You must faithfully perform the ritual prayer [*ṣalāt*], for it serves as a connecting link between you and your Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He). The Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) is reported as having said:**

When the true believer [*muʿmin*] embarks upon the ritual prayer, his heart enters the presence of his Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He). The angels stand around him, blessed grace descends upon him from heaven, and the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He) commends him as a worthy example to all who perform their prayers.

When a believer takes his heart and offers it to the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He), just as he would take a bird from its cage, or a baby from its mother's arms, it is received by a hand that feels familiar from one it already knows well. He is so serenely unself-conscious that, even if he were to be cut and slashed, he would not be aware of it. The story of an actual case like this has been handed down to us. It concerns the experience of a certain righteous man [*ṣāliḥ*], a member of the generation following the Companions of Allāh's Messenger (Allāh bless him and give him peace). His name was 'Urwa ibn az-Zubair ibn al-'Awwām, and he was the son of [Asmā'], the sister of 'Ā'isha (may Allāh the Exalted be well pleased with her and with her father [Abū Bakr]). It so happened that his leg became infected with a gangrenous sore [*ākila*], and he was told that it was absolutely necessary to have it amputated, otherwise all the rest of his body would be destroyed. So he said to the medical doctor: "Wait till I have embarked upon the ritual prayer, then cut it off." His leg was amputated while he was bowing down in prostration, and he did not feel the pain of the operation.

You are nothing but crazy delusion by comparison with your predecessors. You are all talk with no action, all outer form [*ṣūra*] with no spiritual content [*ma' nā*], all outward appearance [*manẓar*] with no intrinsic significance [*makhbar*].

Woe unto you! You must not be misled by the things people say. You are well aware of what you are involved in and what you need to do. As Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) has said:

Oh, but man is a telling witness against himself. (75:14)<sup>85</sup>

How fine you appear in the sight of the common folk [*'awāmm*], and how ugly you are in the eyes of the élite [*khawāṣṣ*].

A certain Shaikh once said to his disciples: "If you suffer unjust treatment, do not act unjustly. If you are praised, do not feel too pleased about it. If you are criticized, do not feel too depressed. If you are accused of telling lies, do not get angry. If you are betrayed, do not betray another." What a splendid saying this is! He was instructing them to sacrifice their lower selves [*nufūs*] and their passionate desires [*ahwiya*].

<sup>85</sup> *bali 'l-insānu 'alā nafsibi baṣīra.*

This actually derives from a saying of the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace):

Gabriel (peace be upon him) once came to me and said: “The Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He) has instructed me to tell you: ‘Pardon those who do you wrong. Maintain a connection with those who would cut you off. Give to those who deprive you. Reflect on the blessings of Allāh, on His handiwork and His ways of managing His creation.’”

If you practice detachment from this world, and your detachment from it comes to be quite real, it will approach you in your dreams, in the form of a woman. She will humble herself before you, and she will tell you: “I am here to be a maidservant for you. I am holding certain valuable items in trust. Take them from my possession.” She will give you a full accounting of your allotted shares, whether they be few or many. When your experience [*maʿrifā*] is more developed, she will come to you in your waking state.

In the case of the Prophets [*anbiyāʾ*] (blessing and peace be upon them all), the first phase of their spiritual state [*ḥāl*] is inspiration [*ilhām*], and the second phase of their spiritual state is dream-vision [*manām*]. When their spiritual states are more highly developed, the angel appears to them quite openly, saying: “The Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He) has instructed me to tell you this and that.”

Be sensible! Leave your important position and come and sit over here, like a member of the group [*jamāʿa*], so that my words can be planted in the ground of your heart. If you had any sense, you would sit in my company and be satisfied with a morsel from me every day, while putting up with my rough way of speaking. All those who have faith [*īmān*] will take root and develop, while those who have no faith will run away from me.

Woe unto you, O you who claim to know so much about the spiritual state of other people! How can you expect us to believe you, when you have failed to study your own condition? That claim of yours is obviously false, so you had better stop lying and repent.

O Allāh, grant us the blessing of truthfulness under all circumstances, and:

Give us in this world good, and good in the hereafter, and guard us against the torment of the fire! (2:201)<sup>86</sup>

<sup>86</sup> *ātina fi ʿd-dunyā ḥasanatan wa fi ʿl-ākhirati ḥasanatan wa qina ʿadbāba ʿn-nār.*

## The Ninth Discourse <sup>87</sup>

**L**eave the lower self [*nafs*] to this world, the heart [*qalb*] to the hereafter, and the innermost being [*sirr*] to the Master [*Mawlā*]. Do not approach this world with confidence, for it is actually a serpent in beautiful disguise. It lures people with its charming appearance, then it destroys them. You must exercise the utmost care to avoid being caught in this trap. You must be utterly sincere in obeying your Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He), in befriending and serving your righteous brothers, and in refusing to indulge the appetites of the flesh. You must affirm the Oneness of the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He) until not a single atom of the entire creation is left within your heart, and you wish for nothing except that which is compatible with the affirmation of Divine Unity [*tawhīd*]. The whole remedy lies in affirming that the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He) is One, and in shunning the serpent of this world.

There is nothing good in you until you really know your lower self, restrain it from indulgence and give it its proper due. Only then will it become tame in relation to the heart, while the heart becomes tame in relation to the innermost being [*sirr*], and the innermost being becomes tame in relation to the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He). You must not spare your lower selves the rod of dedicated struggle. Do not be deceived by their cunning wiles. Do not be deceived by their pretending to be asleep. You must not be taken in by the apparent sleep of the predatory animal, for he is only letting you think he is asleep, while waiting to pounce upon his prey. This lower self will make a show of tameness, submissiveness, humility and compliance with what is good, while secretly contradicting all this. Beware of what it may get up to later on!

**You must be prepared to experience plenty of grief and sorrow, and**

<sup>87</sup> The passages printed in ordinary (non-bold) Jilani font are also to be found in the Sixty-second Discourse of Shaikh 'Abd al-Qādir's work *The Sublime Revelation [al-Faṭḥ ar-Rabbānī]*. (See pp. 443–46 of the translation published by Al-Baz.)



very little in the way of mirth and gladness, for this business is based on sorrow and sadness. It was like this for the Prophets [*anbiyā'*], the Messengers [*mursalūn*] and the righteous ones [*ṣāliḥūn*] who have gone before you (may Allāh bestow His blessing and peace upon them all). Our own Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) had to go through long periods of sadness, and he was always given to reflection. He would never laugh except to reinforce a smile, and only for the sake of politeness would he act in a jovial manner.

The intelligent person amongst you will therefore not seek happiness in this world, nor in children, family, wealth, foodstuffs, articles of clothing, vehicles, or sexual opportunities. All of this is mere delusion. The believer [*mu'min*] finds happiness in the strength of his faith [*īmān*] and certitude [*yaqīn*], and in the arrival of his heart at the door of the nearness of his Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He).

You must open the eye of your lower self [*nafs*] and say to it: "Look at your Lord and see how He looks at you. See how He has destroyed those kings and rich men who were here before you. Remember the disastrous endings of your predecessors, those who ruled this world and reveled in all the comforts it has to offer, only to have it snatched away from them and to be snatched away from it themselves. Now they are held as prisoners in the jail of torment, while their palaces stand deserted, their houses are in ruins, their properties are gone, and only their deeds remain to be accounted for."

Gone are the pleasures of the flesh, and all that remains is weariness and toil. Do not exult, for there is no time for exultation while you are in prison. Do not delight in the beauty of your wife, your children, your home, and the great abundance of your material possessions. Do not exult in things that were not exulted in by the Prophets [*anbiyā'*], the Messengers [*mursalūn*] and the righteous ones [*ṣāliḥūn*] who have gone before you (may the blessing and peace of Allāh be upon them all). Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) has said:

Do not exult; Allāh does not love those who exult. (28:76)<sup>88</sup>

[That is to say,] He does not love those who exult in the things and people of this world, or in anything apart from Him. He does love those who exult in Him and in His nearness (Almighty and Glorious is He).

<sup>88</sup> *lā tafraḥ: inna 'llāba lā yuḥibbu 'l-fariḥīn.*

The joyful exultation of the people [of the Lord] is inspired by their contemplation of the experience they look forward to in the hereafter, not by worldly pleasures, delights and vanities.

O you deluded fool! You have nothing of what you wish you could achieve. O heedless ones! In the hereafter there will be a terrible torment for those who have failed to act in obedience to Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He). If the servant's heart is on the right path, if he practices cautious restraint and leaves all things behind the back of his heart, neither the kingdom of this world nor the kingdom of the hereafter will have any great importance in his sight. He will go to meet the lions in their den. He will mingle with the beasts of the wild, and he will flee from the company of his fellow creatures. He will submit his lower self [*nafs*] to the hunger and thirst and desolation of the desert wastes, and he will say: "O Guide of the perplexed [*Yā Dalīl al-mutaḥayyirīn*], show me the way to You!" He causes such people to have but one single concern. This stage is only reached, however, as the culmination of a process that begins with abstinence from everything unlawful [*ḥarām*], then requires abstinence from that which is indifferently permissible [*mubāḥ*], then abstinence even from that which is absolutely lawful [*ḥalāl mutlaq*].

It is obvious to me that you are addicted to carnal pleasures and desires, to creatures and things of this world, and to reliance on material means [*asbāb*]. So why do you talk about the spiritual states of the righteous, and claim them for yourself? You are trying to tell us about the state of people very different from yourself. You are asking us to support you at other people's expense. You go and study the records in the archives, from which you extract what those people have said, then you repeat their words as if they were your own. You try to make your listeners believe that this comes from your own inspired thinking [*khāṭir*], the power of your own imagination, and the voice of your own heart.

O young man! First you must act on what they have said, then you can talk about it. Only then will your speech be the fruit of the tree of your own heart. This does not come about merely by observing the righteous and committing their words to memory. It can only be achieved by putting what they say into practice, by behaving properly in their company, by thinking well of them, and by keeping this up under all circumstances.

The ordinary person [*‘āmmī*] is awarded merit to the extent of the steps he takes with his feet, while the extraordinary person [*khāṣṣ*] is awarded merit to the extent of his spiritual aspiration. When someone's interests become one single concern, the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He) becomes One for him. When he turns his heart away from everything other than Him, the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He) takes him into His custody. As He has said (Almighty and Glorious is He) in the unambiguous wording [*muḥkam*] of His Book:

[Say:] “My Protecting Friend is Allāh, who has revealed the Book, and He befriends the righteous.” (7:196)<sup>89</sup>

When the heart of this servant comes into contact with his Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He), He becomes his physician [*ṭabīb*] and his intimate friend [*anīs*]. No one else gives him medical treatment, and no one else provides him with intimate friendship. As David (peace be upon him) used to say: “O my God, I went to the physicians of your servants, and all of them guided me to You. Guide me, O Guide of the perplexed!”

When someone loves Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), his heart becomes a total yearning [for Him], a total detachment [from everything other than Him], a total absorption [in Him]. There can be no doubt that his concerns will come to be one single concern.

The reality [*ḥaqīqa*] of the unveiling can only be complete after emergence from all the veils. If you really wish to reach your goal, you must give up both this world and the hereafter, and everything else between the Heavenly Throne and the earth below [*mā taḥta ‘l-‘arsh ila ‘th-tharā*]. All created beings are a veil, with the exception of the Messenger (Allāh bless him and give him peace), for he is the doorway. As Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) has said concerning him (Allāh bless him and give him peace):

Whatever the Messenger gives you, take it. Whatever he forbids you, abstain from it. (59:7)<sup>90</sup>

Thus following him, far from being a veil, is actually the means by which the goal is reached.

O young man! When will your heart become pure and serene, and when will your innermost being become pure and serene, as long as you are guilty of associating partners with Allāh [*musbrik*]? How can you prosper,

<sup>89</sup> *inna waliyyiya ‘llābu ‘lladbī nazzala ‘l-kitāba wa Huwa yatawalla ‘ṣ-ṣāliḥīn.*

<sup>90</sup> *wa mā ātākumu ‘r-rasūlu fa-kbudhūhu wa mā nabākum ‘anbu fa-‘ntabū.*

as long as you spend every night picking on someone or other to chase after, complain to and beg from? How can your heart become pure and serene, as long as it is so devoid of the affirmation of Divine Unity [*tawḥīd*] that it does not contain the slightest trace of it? The affirmation of Divine Unity is a radiant light, while the idolatrous worship [*shirk*] of creatures is a gloomy darkness. How can you prosper, as long as your heart is so devoid of pious devotion [*taqwā*] that it does not contain the slightest trace of it? You are screened off from the Creator by creatures, screened off by material means [*asbāb*] from the Originator [*Musabbib*], screened off by trust [*tawakkul*] in creatures and reliance on them. You are merely an unsubstantiated claim. No bouquet of sweet herbs is awarded on the strength of a claim with no proof.

This business can only be accomplished in one of two ways: The first is by dedicated struggle and exertion, by enduring things that are very difficult and very exhausting. This is the more usual way, as experienced by the righteous [*ṣāliḥūn*]. The second is a talent [*mauhibah*] that requires no effort, a rare gift belonging to a few individuals only.

You must attend to your personal condition as long as your faith [*īmān*] is still weak. Do not mind the business of your family, of the man and woman next door, of the folk in your town and district. Once your faith has grown strong, however, you must make an impression on your family and your children, then on the people at large. Do not make them notice you until after you have armed yourself with the armor of pious devotion [*taqwā*], keeping the helmet of faith on the head of your heart, the sword of the affirmation of Divine Unity [*tawḥīd*] in your hand, and in your quiver the arrows of the answer to prayers [*ijābat ad-du'ā'*]. You must ride the steed of helpful guidance [*tawfīq*] and learn the tactics of attack and retreat, of cut and thrust, then bear down upon the enemies of the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He). At this point you will receive support and assistance from all six directions [left and right, in front and behind, above and below]. You will snatch your fellow creatures from the hands of Satan and carry them to the gate of the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He).

When someone has attained to this station [*maqām*], the veils will be removed from the eye of his heart. Whether he looks to right or left, in front or behind, above or below, his gaze will pierce through and nothing will

block his vision. He will lift up the head of his heart and see the Throne [*‘arsh*] and the heavens, and when he lowers it he will see all the levels of the earth **and all its inhabitants: the jinn, the human beings and the wild animals.** All of this is the result of faith [*īmān*] and experience [*ma’rifā*] of the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He), together with knowledge [*‘ilm*] of the law [*ḥukm*].

When you have attained to this station, you must summon your fellow creatures to the door of the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He), but nothing can come of you before this. If you invite the people when you are not yet at the door of the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He), your invitation to them will fall as a curse upon you. Whenever you try to move, you will find yourself on your knees. Whenever you seek promotion you will be demoted. You do not have a clue about the righteous [*ṣāliḥūn*]. You are mere babble. You are a tongue [*lisān*] without a soul [*janān*]. You are an outer [*ẓāhir*] with no inner [*bāṭin*], a public place [*jilwa*] with no private room [*khalwa*], a tour [*jawla*] with no force [*ṣawla*]. Your sword is made of wood and your arrows are matchsticks. You are a coward with no courage. The most trifling arrow would kill you. A tiny bug could mean the end of the world as far as you are concerned.

O Allāh, fortify our religion [*adyān*], our faith [*īmān*] and our bodies [*abdān*] with Your nearness, and:

Give us in this world good, and good in the hereafter, and guard us against the torment of the fire! (2:201)<sup>91</sup>



<sup>91</sup> *ātina fi ‘d-dunyā ḥasanatan wa fi ‘l-ākhirati ḥasanatan wa qinā ‘adbāba ‘n-nār.*

## The Tenth Discourse <sup>92</sup>

**W**hen the servant [of Allāh] has become extinct to his lower self [*nafs*], his passions [*hawā*], his will [*irāda*] and his fellow creatures [*khalq*], he comes to have his being in the hereafter as far as his inner content [*ma' nā*] is concerned, and in this world with respect to his outer form [*ṣūra*]. He comes to have his being within the knowledge [*ilm*] of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), and is held in His grasp as he swims in the ocean of His power [*qudra*].

When the fear of this fearful one becomes intense, and his heart is on the brink of stopping altogether because he is so afraid, it is then that the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He) draws him near, makes Himself known to him, gives him good tidings, and calms his mind and feelings [*rū'*].<sup>93</sup> This is just how Joseph (peace be upon him) treated his brother Benjamin. When he saw them [the other brothers] ganged up behind him, he invited them to sit and eat in one place, while he seated Benjamin at his side and shared his meal with him. Then, when they had finished eating, he whispered to him secretly, as he told him: "I am none other than Joseph!" This made him very happy. Then Joseph went on to say: "I propose to accuse you of stealing, and I shall bring this charge against you, so be prepared to endure the trial with patience." His other brothers were astonished at what happened to Benjamin in his relationship with Joseph, and they become envious of him, just as they had been envious of Joseph himself at an earlier stage. For it was just when it

<sup>92</sup> The passages printed in ordinary (non-bold) Jilani font are also to be found—with only minor differences almost entirely explicable as due to mistakes by the copyist of *Jalā' al-Khawāṭir*—in the Sixty-second Discourse of Shaikh 'Abd al-Qādir's work *The Sublime Revelation [al-Faṭḥ ar-Rabbānī]*. (See pp. 448–52 of the translation published by Al-Baz.)

<sup>93</sup> According to the Arabic lexicographers, the word *rū'* means: The heart, or the part thereof which is the place of *raw'* [fright, fear]; the mind; the understanding or intellect. The Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) used the word in his saying:

The Trustworthy Spirit [Gabriel] conveyed inspiration into my heart/mind/understanding [*inna 'r-Rūba 'l-Amīna nafatba fi rū'i*]. (See E.W. Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, art. *R-W*-'.)

appeared that Benjamin was guilty of theft, and seemed to have fallen into disgrace, that he actually came to receive the mark of Joseph's favor, and was granted nearness to him.

So it is in the case of this believer [*mu'min*]. When Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) befriends him, He puts him to the test by subjecting him to trials and misfortunes. Then, if he bears them with patience, He blesses him with His gracious favor and His nearness. When bitter experiences come his way, he shows every sign of being completely satisfied, while he gives the appearance of being sick when he gets what he likes, and he remains quite calm at the advent of misfortunes and the decrees of destiny [*aqdār*]. To quote a saying of the Commander of the Believers [*Amīr al-Mu'minīn*], 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (may Allāh be well pleased with him, and may He ennoble his countenance): "Be as if you were a corpse laid out on a slab, so that benefits may accrue to you, and so that harm may be kept away from you."

The lover [*muḥibb*] hears and sees in relation to the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He), but he is blind and deaf in relation to His creatures. The yearning [for Him] envelops his five senses. His physical form [*qālab*] may be in the company of his fellow creatures [*khalq*], but his spiritual content [*ma'nā*] is in the company of the Creator [*Khāliq*]. Like Benjamin, he has his feet down on the earth while his aspiration is up in heaven. His true concerns are hidden within his heart, and his fellow creatures are unable to perceive them. They can see his feet, but they cannot see his aspiration or his interests, because these are hidden away inside the storeroom of the heart, which is the storeroom of the Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He).

Where do you stand in relation to this? O liar, you are stuck with your property, your children, your social status, and your idolatrous worship [*shirk*] of creatures and material means [*asbāb*], yet you claim to be near to the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He). Lying is wrongdoing [*ẓulm*], because the real meaning [*ḥaqīqa*] of wrongdoing is putting something in a place where it does not belong. You must repent and give up your habit of telling lies, before the dreadful consequences of your falsehood come back to haunt you. You must seek the fellowship of the people [of the Lord], for one of their attributes is that when they look at a person and focus their spiritual influence [*himma*] upon him, they love

him, even if the recipient of their attention happens to be a Jew [*Yabūdī*] or a Christian [*Naṣrānī*] or a Zoroastrian [*Majūsī*]. If he happens to be a Muslim, he will grow in faith [*īmān*] and certitude [*yaqīn*] and firmness of conviction [*tatbbīt*].

O you who are so neglectful of the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He) and of the righteous [*ṣāliḥūn*] among His servants! Material possessions and children will not bring you near to the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He). Nothing will bring you close to Him except devotion to duty [*taqwā*] and righteous work [*‘amal ṣāliḥ*]. The unbelievers [*kuffār*] would use their material possessions and their children in order to get close to the potentates and kings, then they would say: “If Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) so wishes, on the Day of Resurrection we shall also draw near to Him by means of our material possessions and our children, and because we have done what He told us (Exalted is He).” But then Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) sent down the revelation:

And it is not your wealth nor your children that will bring you near to Us, but he who believes and does good [will draw near]. As for such, theirs will be a double reward for what they have done, and they will dwell secure in lofty halls. (34:37)<sup>94</sup>

If you try to draw close to Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) by using your material possessions for charitable purposes, you will derive benefit from this while you are still here in this world. If you teach your children how to write, how to read the Qur’ān and how to worship, and if your aim in doing so is to draw near to Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), you will also derive benefit from this. If you wait till after your death, you will have left it too late. Everything that you are now involved in is quite useless. Nothing will bring you any benefit except faith [*īmān*], righteous work [*‘amal ṣāliḥ*], honesty [*ṣidq*] and sincere acknowledgment of the truth [*taṣdīq*].

This experienced believer [*mu’min ‘ārīf*] will continue to earn the good pleasure of the Messenger [*rasūl*] by working with him, until he asks permission for his heart to enter the presence of his Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He). He will be like a servant [*ghulām*] ready to do his bidding, and then, when he has long been in his service, he will say: “O master

<sup>94</sup> *wa mā amwālukum wa lā awlādukum bi’llatī tuqarribukum ‘indanā zulfā illā man āmana wa ‘amila ṣāliḥā: fa-ulā’ika labum jazā’u ‘d-dī’fi bi-mā ‘amilū wa bum fi l-ghurufāti āminūn.*



[*ustādh*], show me the King's door. Employ me in His company. Let me stand in a place where I can see Him. Let my hands hold the ring of the door of His nearness." So his master will take him along with him and lead him near to the door, where he will be asked: "What have you with you there, O Muḥammad? What have you with you there, O emissary [*saḥīr*], O guide [*dalīl*], O teacher [*mu'allim*]?" And he will reply: "As You already know, a chicken [*furaikh*] I have trained and whom I now find ready for service at this door!" Then he will say to his [servant's] heart: "Here you are with your Lord," as Gabriel (peace be upon him) said to him when he carried him up to heaven and brought him near to his Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He): "Here you are with your Lord!" Do righteous work and receive nearness to the Lord of the Worlds!

**As for the people of the Garden of Paradise, "they will dwell secure in lofty halls," safe from the disastrous misfortunes of this world. And as for those who are patient in the face of poverty, in bearing the burden of caring for dependants, in living with sicknesses and diseases, sorrows and cares, they have nothing to fear from death, for they are safe from having to drink its cup again and again, and from the interrogation in the grave by the angels Munkar and Nakīr. They will be admitted into the Garden of Paradise, and the gates will be locked behind them, so there can be no question of their ever having to leave it throughout all eternity. The people of the Garden of Paradise will find their peaceful repose [*rāḥa*] when they enter therein. In the case of the lovers [of Allāh], however, there could be no peaceful repose for their hearts, not even if they were to enter a million Gardens of Paradise, until their Beloved arrived. They do not wish for any product of creation [*makhḷūq*]; they only wish for a Creator [*Khāliq*]. They do not wish for benefits [*ni'am*]; they only wish for the Benefactor [*Mun'im*]. They wish for the root [*aṣl*]; they do not wish for the branch [*far'*].**

You must curtail your expectations and diminish your greedy ambition. Perform the prayer [*ṣalāt*] of one who is about to take his leave. It is not fitting for a believer [*mu'min*] to go to sleep without having his last will and testament written and placed under his head, for if the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He) allows him to wake up in good health, he will be blessed, and if not, his family will find his testamentary disposition [*waṣīyya*] to their benefit after his death, and they will pray for him to receive the mercy of Allāh.

You should eat as someone about to take his leave would eat. You should be with your family as someone about to take his leave of them would be. When you meet with your brethren [*ikhwān*] you should do so like one who is about to take his leave of them. You must therefore instill in your heart: “I am someone who is about to take his leave.” How can it not be like this for a person whose business is in the control of someone Other than himself?

Only a very few individuals among all creatures are given to know what will happen to them, what will become of them and at what time they will die. This is all stored within their hearts and they can see it as plainly as you can see the sun up there, but their tongues give no expression to it. The first to become aware of this is the innermost being [*sirr*]. Then the innermost being informs the heart, and the heart informs the tranquil self [*an-nafs al-muṭmaʿinna*], as a confidential secret. It is made aware of this after it has received its education and spent time in the service of the heart. One becomes qualified for this after dedicated struggles and sufferings. A person who has attained to this station [*maqām*] is the deputy [*nāʾib*] of the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He) on the earth and His vicegerent [*khalīfa*] upon it. He is the door to the mysteries [*bāb al-asrār*]. He holds the keys to the treasure houses of the hearts, they being the treasure houses of the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He). This is something beyond the comprehension of creatures. All that is visibly apparent about him is merely a speck of dust from his mountain, a drop of water from his ocean and a lamplight from his sun.

O Allāh, I beg pardon of You for speaking about these mysteries, although You know that I am overwhelmed [*maghlūb*]. As one of the righteous has said: “Beware of that for which one needs to apologize.” But when I get up on this platform I vanish from you all, and there is no one left in front of my heart for me to apologize to, or to make me wary of speaking to you.

When this heart is sound, and one’s feet are firmly planted at the door of the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He), he falls into the trackless wilderness of origination [*takwīn*], into its valleys and into its ocean. He will have his being sometimes in his speech, sometimes in his spiritual influence [*himma*] and sometimes in his gaze. He becomes the action [*fi ʿl*] of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) and is personally detached; he

ceases to exist [*yaḥnā*], while He remains in being [*yabqā*]. There are just a few of you who believe in this. The majority of you are those who deny the truth of it. To believe in this and to put it into practice is an ultimate degree [*nibāya*].

No one would negate the spiritual states [*aḥwāl*] of the righteous [*ṣāliḥūn*], except a hypocrite [*munāfiq*], an impostor [*dajjāl*] riding on his passions [*bawā*]. This business is built on genuine conviction [*i'tiqād*], then on practice [*'amal*]. If someone practices the outer form [*ẓāhir*] of the law [*ḥukm*], that practice will result in his having experience [*ma'rifa*] of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) and knowledge [*'ilm*] of Him. The law will come to be between him and creatures, and knowledge between him and his Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He). His outer actions [*a'māl ẓāhira*] will come to be a mere speck in relation to his inner actions [*a'māl bāṭina*]. His physical organs may be in repose, but his heart will not rest. The eyes in his head may fall asleep, but his heart will not slumber. His heart will go on working and remembering while he is asleep.

How long will it take for you to recognize this world for what it is, so that you will finally abandon it, and so that you will repudiate it as if you were divorcing a wife? How long will it be before you give up feeling envious of your brothers and coveting what they have in their possession? Woe unto you! You envy your Muslim brother because of his wife, his children, his house and all his worldly goods. But each of these is something that has been allotted to him, and you have no share in it. You covet his wife, but she is a product of creation that has been allotted to him, in this world and the hereafter. You hanker after luxury, despite the fact that straitened circumstances are your predestined lot. You are therefore tormented and despised, because you keep trying to obtain what has not been allotted to you. You suffer so much agony in the pursuit of this world, and you want it all so badly, yet you can have no part of it except your own allotted share.

O Allāh, awaken our hearts from their heedless negligence! Awaken us to consciousness of You! Engage us in Your service, and:

Give us in this world good, and good in the hereafter, and guard us against the torment of the fire! (2:201)<sup>95</sup>

<sup>95</sup> *ātina fi 'd-dunyā ḥasanatan wa fi 'l-ākhirati ḥasanatan wa qinā 'adbāba 'n-nār.*

## The Eleventh Discourse<sup>96</sup>

The Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) is reported as having said:

In every specialized craft, you should seek the help of a qualified expert.<sup>97</sup>

This worshipful service [*ibāda*] is a specialized craft, and its qualified experts are those who are sincere [*mukbliṣūn*] about their work, those who are learned [*ālimūn*] in the law [*ḥukm*] and who put it into practice [*āmilūn*], those who take their leave of creatures after their experience [*maʿrifā*] of Him, those who flee from their own selves, from their possessions and their children and everything apart from their Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He), running on the feet of their hearts and their innermost beings [*asrār*]...<sup>98</sup> into the presence of the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He), so they come to be among those concerning whom Allāh has said:

And surely in Our sight they are among the chosen, the excellent. (38:47)<sup>99</sup>

**The believer [*muʾmin*] never ceases to feel afraid until the document of immunity [*kitāb al-amān*] is given to his innermost being [*sirr*], which then keeps it concealed from his heart and does not let it become aware of it. But this is granted only to a very few individuals [*āḥād*].**

<sup>96</sup> The passages printed in ordinary (non-bold) Jilani font are also to be found—with only minor differences almost entirely explicable as due to mistakes by the copyist of *Jalāʾ al-Khawāṭir*—in the Sixty-second Discourse of Shaikh ʿAbd al-Qādir’s work *The Sublime Revelation [al-Faṭḥ ar-Rabbānī]*. (See pp. 453–55 of the translation published by Al-Baz.)

<sup>97</sup> *istāʾmū ʿalā kulli ṣanʾatin bi-ṣāliḥi abliḥā*. The Arabic word *ṣanʾatin* [specialized craft] has been omitted by the copyist from the Arabic text of the Pakistani edition of *Jalāʾ al-Khawāṭir*.

<sup>98</sup> At the point marked by this ellipsis, the following sentences occur in the text of *The Sublime Revelation [al-Faṭḥ ar-Rabbānī]*:

Their physical forms are in civilized surroundings among creatures, while their hearts are in the wastelands and deserts. They keep to this pattern until their hearts are well trained and their wings are strong enough to fly up into the sky. Their spiritual aspirations [*bimam*] are lofty and their hearts soar up....

<sup>99</sup> *wa innabum ʿindanā la-mina ʾl-muṣṭafaina ʾl-akbyār*.

Woe unto you, O you idolatrous worshipper of creatures [*yā mushrik bi'l-khalq*]! How often will you knock on doors that do not have your own homes at the back of them? How often will you knock on iron without any fire [to melt it]? You have no common sense; you have no faculty of reason; you have no sense of order and direction. Woe unto you! Come close to me, and eat some food that does not belong to me. If you ever tasted the food of the Creator [*Khāliq*], your heart and your innermost being [*sirr*] would surely abstain from the food of creatures [*khalq*].

This is something that can only be experienced in the heart behind the clothes, not by the flesh and not by the skin, but this heart is fit for nothing as long as it is still attached to creatures. Conviction [*iqān*] is still uncertain as long as the heart continues to retain one atom of the love of this world. When faith [*īmān*] has become certitude [*yaqīn*], certitude has become direct experience [*ma'rifa*], and direct experience has become knowledge [*ilm*], then you will become an expert [*jabbād*] for the sake of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He). You will take from the hand of the rich and give back to the poor. You will become the owner of the restaurant, dishing out nourishment with the hand of your heart and your innermost being [*sirr*]. You deserve no respect at all, O hypocrite, until you have come to be like this. Alas for you, you have not received instruction at the hand of a pious, abstinent Shaikh, learned in the law [*ḥukm*] of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He). Alas for you, you want something for nothing. It will not drop into your hand. When things of this world cannot be gained without strenuous effort, how about what is in the presence of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He)? Where do you stand in relation to those whom Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) has commended, in the precise terms of His Book, for worshipping Him so frequently? Of them he has said:

They used to sleep only a little during the night, and with the dawning of each day they would seek forgiveness. (51:17,18)<sup>100</sup>

When He recognized the sincerity [*ṣidq*] of their dedication to His service, He appointed an agent to wake them up and arouse them from

<sup>100</sup> *kānū qalīlan min al-laili mā yabja'ūn—wa bi'l-ashāri hum yastaghfirūn.*

their beds. As the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) has said:

Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) will say: "O Gabriel, make so-and-so get up, and put that other person to sleep."<sup>101</sup>

As for the people [of the Lord], when the footsteps of their hearts have finally led them to their Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He), they will see in their sleep what they never saw in their state of wakefulness. Their hearts and their innermost beings [*asrār*] will see something they cannot see while they are awake. They have fasted [*ṣāmū*] and prayed [*ṣallaw*], they have fought their lower selves by subjecting them to hunger and disgrace, and they have labored night and day to perform all kinds of worshipful service [*ibādāt*], until the Garden of Paradise has come to be theirs. But now that it is theirs, they will be told: "The way is not this. It is the quest for the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He)." Their work must come to be performed in the sphere of their hearts, then when it reaches Him it will be confirmed and authenticated in His sight.

When someone knows what he is looking for, he attaches little importance to the energy and effort he devotes to the obedient service of his Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He). The believer [*mu'min*] never ceases to labor until he meets his Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He).<sup>102</sup>

<sup>101</sup> In the text of *The Sublime Revelation [al-Faṭḥ ar-Rabbānī]* this quotation of the saying of the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) is followed by:

There are two ways of interpreting this. [First, as meaning:] "Make so-and-so get up, for he is sincere [*ṣādiq*] in his worshipful service, a fugitive from his sins. Drive trouble and sleep away from him. And put that other person to sleep, for he is a hypocritical liar. He is falsehood within falsehood, a curse within a curse, so cast the spell of slumber upon him, so that I shall not see his face among those who stand upright."

The other way of taking it would be: "Make so-and-so get up, for he is a lover [*muḥibb*] who is still seeking, and a necessary part of the lover's condition is weary toil. And put that other person to sleep, because he is a beloved [*mabbūb*], and a necessary part of the beloved's condition is restful comfort. He must be allowed to sleep and rest, because he has been working night and day in order to fulfill his covenant and to prove himself true in his love. Since he has fully accomplished this, the moment has come for the fulfillment of the covenant of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), because He has guaranteed rest in His company to all who are weary from toil on His behalf."

<sup>102</sup> At this point in the text of *The Sublime Revelation [al-Faṭḥ ar-Rabbānī]*, Shaikh 'Abd al-Qādir (may Allāh be well pleased with him) continues:

Woe unto you! You claim to be my disciple, yet you keep your property hidden from me. You are lying when you make such a claim. The disciple [*murīd*] has neither shirt nor turban, neither gold nor money to his name in relation to his Shaikh. He just eats at his table whatever he tells him to eat. He has no existence of his own [*buwa jānin 'anbu*], as he waits for his Shaikh to tell him what he must do and what he must not do, because he acknowledges that this comes from Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He). His best interests are being looked after by his Shaikh, and he is held on a tight rein.

If you harbor any doubts about your Shaikh, you should not stay in his company, for it will do you no good to share his fellowship or become his disciple. When a sick person has doubts about his physician, he cannot be cured by his treatment.

The Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) has said:

When a man dies and enters his grave, and when he has been interrogated by [the two angels called] Munkar and Nakīr, and when he has responded to their questioning, his spirit [*rūḥ*] will then be permitted to ascend to Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) and to bow down in prostration [*sujūd*] before Him, in the company of a congregation of the angels. Thus his spirit will get to meet Him, and to it will be disclosed all that which was formerly veiled from its sight. Then it will be carried off to the Garden of Paradise, to join the company of the spirits of the righteous [*arwāḥ aṣ-ṣāliḥīn*]. Various spirits will come forward to bid it welcome. They will enquire about its circumstances and about the affairs of the world below, so it will tell them everything of which it has any knowledge about all that. Then they will ask the newly arrived spirit: “What has so-and-so been doing?” and it will say in reply: “He died before me.” On hearing this, the spirits will say: “He never reached us. There is no power and no strength except through Allāh, the High, the Almighty [*lā ḥawla wa lā quwwata illā bi’llāhi ‘l-‘Alīyyi ‘l-‘Azīm*], who must have sent him straight to his mother, the Pit [*Hāwīya*].”<sup>103</sup>

Then the spirits will be lodged inside the craw [*ḥawṣala*] of one of the green birds which feed on the plants in the Garden of Paradise, and which betake themselves for refuge to a lamp suspended beneath the Heavenly Throne [*al-‘Arsh*].<sup>104</sup>

<sup>103</sup> An allusion to the verse [*āya*] of the Qur’ān in which Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) has said:

Then he whose deeds weigh heavy in the Balance shall inherit a pleasing life, but he whose deeds weigh light in the Balance, his mother shall be the Pit. Ah, what will convey to you what she is? A blazing fire! (101:6–11) [*fa-ammā man tbaqulat mawāzīnubu—fa-buwa fī ‘isbatin rādiya—wa ammā man khaḥḥat mawāzīnubu—fa-ummubu Hāwīya—wa mā adrāka mā biya—nārun ḥāmiya.*]

<sup>104</sup> A fuller account of the green birds of the Garden of Paradise has been provided by Shaikh ‘Abd al-Qādir (may Allāh be well pleased with him) in his massive work *Sufficient Provision for Seekers of the Path of Truth* [*al-Ghunya li-Tālibi Tariq al-Haqq*], where he writes:

We also know that the spirits of the martyrs and of all the believers [*arwāḥ aṣb-shuhadā wa ‘l-mu’minīn*] will be lodged inside the craws [*ḥawāṣil*] of certain green birds, which are free to roam about in the Garden of Paradise, and that they will betake themselves for refuge to lamps of radiant light beneath the Heavenly Throne [*al-‘Arsh*]. Then, when the second blast of the trumpet is sounded [*‘inda ‘n-naṣṣakhati ‘tb-thāniya*], they will come back to join their physical bodies on the earth, to face the review and the reckoning on the Day of Resurrection [*Yawm al-Qiyāma*]. We know all this from the traditional report that has been handed down to us on the authority of Ibn ‘Abbās (may Allāh be well pleased with them both), according to whom Allāh’s Messenger (Allāh bless him and give him peace) once said:

When your [believing] brothers have been slain by someone [on the side of the unbelievers], Allāh will lodge their spirits inside the crops of certain green birds, which are free to roam about in the Garden of Paradise, and they will betake themselves for refuge to lamps of gold in the shade of the Heavenly Throne. Then, when they discover the delightful quality of their food, their drink, and their resting place, they will say: “Who will let our brothers know that we are actually alive, enjoying sustenance in the Garden of Paradise, so that they will not abstain from the [sacred] struggle [*jibād*], so that they will not flinch from the [holy] war [*ḥarb*]?” So Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) will tell them, for He is the Most Truthful of tellers [*Huwa Aṣḍaḥu ‘l-qā ilīn*]: “I shall let them know!”

There we have a good description of the encounter as it will be experienced by the vast majority of the believers [*aghlab al-mu'minīn*]. May the peace of Allāh be upon them all, and His greetings of welcome!

O Allāh, let us be numbered amongst them! Let us live the life they live, and let us die the death they die! Āmīn.





## The Twelfth Discourse <sup>105</sup>

**O** you who are so poor! O you who are so afflicted with misfortunes! You must remember death and that which lies beyond it, for then your poverty and your misfortunes will come to seem quite unimportant to you, and it will be an easy matter for you to bid this world farewell. Accept this from me, for I have put this to the test of experience and have actually lived through it.

The people [of the Lord] wish for nothing other than the countenance of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He). They have arisen and left the Gardens of Paradise, and they have taken their stand in the presence of the Creator of the Gardens. “Their sides shun their couches” (32:16),<sup>106</sup> as they go in search of His countenance and His good pleasure. They have become detached from their material possessions. Their commandment has come to them, closing their shops and causing them to go and live in the desert wastes and the empty spaces. They have no fixed abode. Their nighttime is not night, and their daytime is not day. “Their sides shun their couches.” Their hearts come to be like grains of corn in a hot frying pan, as they keep trying to pop out and escape from it. Their hearts are grains of corn in the frying pan of the contemplation of the Day of Resurrection, with its reckoning, its interrogation and its settlement of accounts. They are the sensible ones, the intelligent ones, the clever ones, the ones who really know this world and its inhabitants, who are really familiar with its snares, its bewitching fascination, its treachery, and its murderous treatment of its Prophets [*anbiyāʾ*]. The hearts of the people [of the Lord] have received the call, so “their sides shun their couches.” Their inner contents [*maʿānī*] have heard, in the wake of the hearing of

<sup>105</sup> The passages printed in ordinary (non-bold) Jilani font are also to be found—with only minor differences almost entirely explicable as due to mistakes by the copyist of *Jalāʾ al-Khawātir*—in the Sixty-second Discourse of Shaikh ʿAbd al-Qādir’s work *The Sublime Revelation [al-Faṭḥ ar-Rabbānī]*. (See pp. 455–56 of the translation published by Al-Baz.)

<sup>106</sup> *tatajāfā junūbuhum ʿani l-maḍājīʿi*.

their outer forms [*ṣuwar*]. The birds have heard, along with the hearing of the cages. They have heard the words of the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He) in one of His revealed utterances:

A liar is he who claims to love Me, yet who goes to sleep and forgets Me as soon as the night sets in.<sup>107</sup>

They would feel too embarrassed and ashamed to be guilty of this kind of inconsistency, so they have stood in His presence through the darkness of the night, humbling themselves and letting their tears roll down their cheeks. They have addressed Him through their tears. They have entered His presence in a state of fear and hope—fear of rejection and hope of acceptance.

O my people! You must come to terms with this external rule of law [*ḥukm ṣāḥir*]. You must act in accordance with the Book of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) and the Sunna of Allāh's Messenger (Allāh bless him and give him peace), and you must be sincere in your actions. Then look and see what gracious favors and generous blessings you will receive from Him, and how you will enjoy the delights of intimate conversation [*munājāt*] with Him!

O you who have committed such flagrant offences! O you who have turned your backs, come forward again! O you who have run away, come home! Do not try to run away from the arrows of disaster. The idea of escaping is nothing but fantasy. Hold your ground, for then you will receive exactly what you need, both the bitter and the sweet. Hold your ground! If a thing is destined for some other person, it can never fall to your lot. The breasts of the champions of truth [*siddīqīn*] are strong enough to be targets for the arrows of disaster, but you are not worthy of them. They are not for you, and you do not experience them directly. You are merely followers.

The eye of the head is for looking at this world, the eye of the heart is for looking at the hereafter, and the eye of the innermost being [*sirr*] is for looking at the Truth [*Ḥaqq*]. The eye of the head is satisfied with this world, and the eye of the heart is satisfied with the hereafter, while the eye of the innermost being is always with the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He) in this world and the hereafter, because it is focused on Him in both realms.

<sup>107</sup> *kadhaba mani 'dda'ā maḥabbatī idbā janna 'l-lailu nāma 'annī.*

The believer [*mu' min*] is someone who has this peculiar quality: If he happens to be in a populous built-up area [*' umrān*], he is a mercy to the people of that locality. Were it not for him, that whole district would sink into the ground. Were it not for him, the walls would come tumbling down on top of the people living there. You must give credence to such a person; you must believe in him. If you reject him and treat him with hostility, you belong in the company of those ignorant folk who killed the Prophets [*anbiyā'*] and Messengers [*mursalīn*] (may the blessings and peace of Allāh be upon them all), and of those who showed enmity toward them and toward their Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He), those outcasts banished and excluded from His presence.

O Allāh, relent toward us and toward them! Guide us aright and guide them aright! Āmīn.

O you who take such delight in the bounty of this world, you will very soon be leaving it all behind. How fine are the words of one of the poets:

Listen! You may just catch the sound.  
But do not delay! It will not wait around.

All you want is to live a life of ease and comfort, but the end of all of this is death. Your property will very soon be gone, as will your span of life. Your eyesight will soon grow dim, your mental faculties will deteriorate, and your capacity for eating and drinking will diminish. You will see the pleasures of the flesh, but you will not be capable of indulging in them to the slightest extent. Your wife and children will come to hate you and wish for you to die. Care and grief will be heaped upon you. This world will depart and the hereafter will come to meet you. If you have a good deed to your credit there, the hereafter will bid you welcome and enfold you in its bosom, but if this is not the case, then the grave will be your lodging place and the Fire of Hell will be your custodian.

What is this crazy delusion? As the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) used to say:

*The way of life is the way of life of the hereafter.*<sup>108</sup>

He repeated this over and over again, to himself and to his Companions (may Allāh be well pleased with them all).

Learn from me, O ignorant ones! Follow me, for I am your guide to

<sup>108</sup> *al-'aishu 'aishu 'l-ākbara.*

**the path of right conduct** [*rashād*]. Woe unto you! You claim to be my disciple, yet you keep your property hidden from me. You are lying when you make such a claim. The disciple [*murīd*] has neither shirt nor turban, neither gold nor money to his name in relation to his Shaikh. He just eats at his table whatever he tells him to eat. He has no existence of his own [*huwa fānin 'anhu*], as he waits for his Shaikh to tell him what he must do and what he must not do, because he acknowledges that this comes from Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He). His best interests are being looked after by his Shaikh, and he is held on a tight rein.

If you harbor any doubts about your Shaikh, you should not stay in his company, for it will do you no good to share his fellowship or become his disciple. When a sick person has doubts about his physician, he cannot be cured by his treatment.

**You must not focus your attention on things that do not concern you, in case you fail to notice what really does concern you. Things that should not concern you include those comments of yours about the states of other people and their faults. When a person is controlled by the lower self** [*nafs*], the passions [*hawā*] and the urges of nature [*tab'*], everything he says will be counted against him, not to his credit. He is like the proverbial idiot who gathers firewood by night [*ḥāṭib al-lail*], when he cannot tell what he may be holding in his hand.<sup>109</sup>

When the self becomes tranquil and tame, and when it is no longer affected by the fire of the passions and the urges of nature, the faculty of reason is jolted into action, and faith [*īmān*] becomes strong. With the advent of tranquillity comes discernment, the ability to distinguish between the true and the false. The person concerned will now refrain from falsehood and speak the truth. Then the rule of law [*ḥukm*] will

<sup>109</sup> Shaikh 'Abd al-Qādir (may Allāh be well pleased with him) has often referred to the proverbial collector of firewood by night, most notably in the following passage from the Third Discourse of *The Sublime Revelation* [*al-Faṭḥ ar-Rabbānī*]. (See p. 34 of the translation published by Al-Baz):

O young man! In your approach to this world, do not be like someone who gathers wood by night, not knowing what may fall into his hand. I notice that in your dealings you behave just like such a person, gathering wood on a very dark, moonless night, and taking no light with him. The ground there is sandy, covered with a lot of dense undergrowth. The place is teeming with deadly insects, so one of them could kill you at any moment. You had better do your wood-gathering in the day-time, because the light of the sun will prevent you from picking up something harmful to you. Conduct all your affairs by the sun of the affirmation of Unity [*tawḥīd*], of the sacred law [*shar'*] and of pious devotion [*taqwā*], for this sun will prevent you from falling into the trap of the desires, the self, the devil, and idolatrous creature-worship [*ash-shirk bi'l-kbālq*], as well as preventing you from moving along too hastily.

present itself to him, so he must act in accordance with it and become a servant to it, following the Messenger (Allāh bless him and give him peace) by observing what he has commanded and what he has forbidden, because he can hear the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He) when He says:

So whatever the Messenger gives you, take it; and from whatever he forbids you, abstain. (59:7)<sup>110</sup>

This applies generally to all the commandments and prohibitions brought by the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace), so he must carry out what he has commanded and avoid committing any of the sins he has forbidden. Only then will he come to be a truly devout Muslim. Provided he really puts this into practice, he will come to be someone who has direct knowledge [*‘ārīf*] of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), someone who knows how to stay calm and quiet, and to listen to what is said to him within his heart. He will reach the stage where he is always being spoken to, is always listening attentively, and is always in a state of bliss.

O Allāh, grant us the joy of Your nearness, the delight of Your intimate conversation, and blissful happiness with You, and:

Give us in this world good, and good in the hereafter, and guard us against the torment of the fire! (2:201)<sup>111</sup>



<sup>110</sup> *wa mā ātākumu ‘r-rasūlu fa-kbudhūbu wa mā nabākum ‘anbu fa-‘ntabū.*

<sup>111</sup> *ātīnā fi ‘d-dunyā ḥasanatan wa fi ‘l-ākbarati ḥasanatan wa qīnā ‘adbāba ‘n-nār.*

## The Thirteenth Discourse <sup>112</sup>

**W**hen someone has achieved genuine detachment [*zuhd*] from creatures, it is correct for them to feel attracted to him. They can derive benefit from hearing what he has to say and from paying attention to him. **When the heart has achieved genuine detachment from creatures, and the innermost being [*sirr*] has become detached from everything apart from Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), or at least from everything apart from nearness [to Him], that nearness will be his bosom friend [*khatīl*] in this world and his intimate companion [*anīs*] in the hereafter.**

When you know creatures through knowledge [*‘ilm*] of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) and experience them through experience [*ma‘rifa*] of Him, their attributes will disappear from you. Jinn and human beings and angels will vanish from you. Your heart will assume a different character, as will your innermost being [*sirr*]. The shell of your existence [*wujūd*] will be removed from you, the shell of the usual custom [*‘āda*] of the children of Adam (peace be upon him). The law [*hukm*] will come and form a gown for you to wear, so you will go about the earth clothed, commanding yourself and all fellow creatures of your Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He) to obey His commandment. Knowledge Lordly and Divine [*al-‘ilm ar-rabbānī al-ilāhī*] will come and form a garment over your heart and your innermost being [*sirr*].

You must not retire to your hermit’s cell with ignorance for company, because to isolate yourself from your fellow creatures in a state of ignorance is a great and total perversion. This is why the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) has said:

Complete your studies [*tafaqqah*], then you may retire.

<sup>112</sup> The passages printed in ordinary (non-bold) Jilani font are also to be found in the Sixty-second Discourse of Shaikh ‘Abd al-Qādir’s work *The Sublime Revelation [al-Faṭḥ ar-Rabbānī]*. (See pp. 456–59 of the translation published by Al-Baz.)

It is not appropriate for you to withdraw into the hermit's cell, as long as there is anyone upon the face of the earth whom you fear and on whom you pin your hopes. There should be no one left as far as you are concerned, apart from One who is feared and One who is looked to in hope, namely Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He).

Worshipful service [*ʿibāda*] means giving up habitual behavior [*ʿāda*]. There can be no habitual conduct until you come to be in the situation of worshipful service. You must do away with attachment to this world and the hereafter, and become attached to the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He). Do not try to pass counterfeit coins, for the assayer has a sharp eye. He will accept nothing from you without applying the touchstone [*miḥakk*]. Take that counterfeit stuff you carry around with you and toss it away. Do not regard it as having any value. Nothing will be accepted from you [as precious metal] unless it has been exposed to the goldsmith's bellows and purified of dross, so do not imagine this to be an easy business. Most of you would claim to be sincere, but are actually hypocrites. Were it not for the examination [*imtiḥān*], the claims would be more numerous still. If someone lays claim to tolerance [*ḥilm*], we put him to the test by provoking him to anger. If someone lays claim to generosity [*karam*], we put him to the test by making demands of him. Whatever a person lays claim to, we test him with its opposite.

**Woe unto you! You want to get something for nothing, but it will not fall into your hands. You must pay the price and then take it. He who appreciates the value is the one who gets the full enjoyment. You must put up with the care and sorrow of this world, so that you may eventually experience the joy of the hereafter. Our Prophet Muḥammad (Allāh bless him and give him peace) had to go through long periods of sadness, and he was always given to reflection. He was also dedicated to frequent worship [*ʿibāda*], even though he had already been granted forgiveness for his sins, both those in the past and those that were yet to come.<sup>113</sup> He would often pause to reflect (may Allāh bless him and give him peace) on what might lie in store for his community [*umma*] after he had gone.**

<sup>113</sup> An allusion to the beginning of *Sūrat al-Faṭḥ* ["Victory"], where Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) has said:

Surely We have given you [O Muḥammad] a clear victory, that Allāh may forgive you your former and your latter sins [*innā fataḥnā laka faṭḥan mubīnā—li-yaghfirā laka ʾilābu mā taqaddama min dhanbika wa mā taʾakḥḥarā*]. (48:1,2)

Whenever al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī<sup>114</sup> (may Allāh bestow His mercy upon him) went out of his house, the signs of sadness used to emanate from his heart, and sorrow and grief would leave their mark upon his face. Sadness is the normal condition of the believer [*mu'min*] under all circumstances, until he meets his Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He).

The people [of the Lord] remain in a state of dumb muteness until they receive permission to speak to their fellow creatures, waiting until He brings them together with the righteous [*ṣāliḥūn*]. Then, when they are ready to speak to them and guide them to their desired goal, their speech becomes totally articulate. If their hearts incline toward creatures, along comes the hand of [divine] jealousy [*ghaira*] to check them and pull in their reins. It locks the door to keep them shut out until they apologize and repent. Then, once their repentance has been confirmed, it reopens the door for them and their hearts are drawn close [to the Lord].

O you who are dead at heart, what is the point of your sitting here in my presence? O slaves of this world and its potentates, O slaves of the rich, O slaves of extravagance and indulgences [*rukbaṣ*], woe unto you! Even if the price of a grain of wheat should rise as high as one dīnār [gold coin], it would not bother me in the least.<sup>115</sup>

The true believer [*mu'min*] is not concerned about his sustenance, because of the strength of his faith [*īmān*] and his trusting reliance [*ittikāl*] on his Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He). Do not count yourself among the true believers. Put yourself in a separate category from them!

Glory be to Him who has made me stay here in your midst! Whenever I try to spread my wings and fly, along comes the hand of Power [*Qudra*] to clip them. Whenever the wing of knowledge [*ilm*] spreads itself and tries to fly, it gets clipped by the scissors of the Law [*Hukm*].

Pay attention to what I have to say, and accept my good advice. You must follow the indications of the affirmation of Divine Unity [*tawḥīd*] and

<sup>114</sup> Al-Ḥasan ibn Abi'l-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī is revered as one of the greatest saints of early Islām. Born in Medina in A.H. 21/642 C.E., he was brought up in Baṣra, where he met many Companions of the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace.) He died in A.H. 110/728 C.E.

<sup>115</sup> It is interesting to note that, as it has been recorded in *The Sublime Revelation [al-Faṭḥ ar-Rabbānī]* (p. 459 of the translation published by Al-Baz), this sentence does not end with "it would not bother me in the least," but with the words: "...the believer [*mu'min*] would not get worried or feel concerned about his sustenance, because of the strength of his certitude [*yaqīn*] and his trusting reliance on his Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He)."



pay close attention to the words of the champions of truth [*ṣiddīqūn*] and the saints [*awliyāʾ*]. Their speech is like inspiration [*wahy*] from Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He). They speak on His behalf and at His command, beyond the competence of the common herd [*ʿawāmm ṭaghbām*]. You are crazy. You compose your speech from the books and then deliver it. If you lost your written notes, what would you do? What if your books caught fire? Or if the lamp you see to read by went out, if your jar broke and the ink got spilled, where would you find your flint, your tinderbox, your matches and your fuel?

When someone acquires knowledge, puts it into practice and does so sincerely, his flint and his fuel come to be within his heart, a light from the light of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He). He can then provide illumination for himself and for others.

Away with you, O sons of babble, O sons of pages composed by the hands of the lower selves [*nufūs*] and the passions [*abwīya*]! Woe unto you, you are quarreling with the lucky one [*maḥzūz*]. You will be crushed and destroyed and will fail to achieve your own good fortune. How can the preordainment [*sābiqa*] and foreknowledge [*ʿilm*] be altered by your effort? You must be believers who surrender themselves [*muʿminūn muslimūn*]. Surely you have heard His words (Almighty and Glorious is He):

Those who believed in Our signs and had surrendered themselves. (43:69)<sup>116</sup>

The reality [*ḥaqīqa*] of Islām is submissive obedience [*istislām*]. The people [of the Lord] have thrown themselves prostrate before the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He). They have forgotten ‘why?’ and ‘how?’ and ‘do’ and ‘don’t.’ They perform works of obedient service [*tāʾāt*] of all kinds, and their attitude is one of fearfulness. This is why the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He) has described them approvingly in these words of His:

They give that which they give with hearts afraid, because they are about to return unto their Lord. (23:60)<sup>117</sup>

[In other words:] “They carry out the commandments of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) and observe His prohibitions. They endure with patience the tests I set them and they are grateful for the gifts I give them.

<sup>116</sup> *alladhīna āmanū bi-āyātīnā wa kānū muslimīn.*

<sup>117</sup> *wa ʿladhīna yuʿtūna mā ātaw wa qulūbubum wajilatun annabum ilā Rabbibim rājiʿūn.*

They surrender [*yusallimūna*] their own selves, their goods, their children and their reputations into the hand of My preordainment, while their hearts are timorous, afraid of Me.”

O you who are so deluded by affluence and the peace and comfort it affords, the time is already near at hand when your peace and comfort will turn into worry and confusion, your affluence into poverty, and your ease into hardship. You must not be deluded by your present state of affairs. You must make it your regular practice to attend the sessions of divine remembrance [*majālis adh-dhikr*]. You should always think well of the Shaikhs, in practical matters as well as in the sphere of knowledge [*‘ilm*]. You must listen to them carefully and pay attention to what they have to say. If the seeker [*murīd*] has the correct attitude toward companionship [*ṣubḥa*] with the Shaikh, it will feed him through the mouth of his heart, nourishing him with the food and drink of the kind of knowledge that is only acquired by direct experience [*ma’rifah*].

O you backsliders! You must make your hearts empty of creatures. You have seen fit to indulge in vanity. Tomorrow [at the Resurrection] the people of the Garden of Paradise will be told: “Enter the Garden!” Even today, if the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He) examines the hearts of His special few [*khawāṣṣ*] among His servants, He will see that they are empty of this world, of the Garden of Paradise, and of everything else apart from Him. He will say to them: “You must enter the Garden, that is, the Garden of My nearness, both immediately [*‘ājilan*] and later on [*ājilan*].”

Woe unto you! You must not agree with your lower selves [*nufūs*] when they get into arguments with your Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He). Your enemies are your own lower selves, as He has made clear to you. Whenever you satisfy their appetites, gratify them, and let them grow fat, they eventually devour you. They turn into savage beasts of prey. You must deny them access to their pleasures and desires. Give them no more than their proper due, meaning the bare minimum which they cannot do without, such as a crumb to stave off hunger and a rag to cover the private parts [*‘awra*]. Even this should only be given on the condition of obedience to Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He). You must say to your lower self: “I shall not give you your proper due [*ḥaqq*] until you obey Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), by keeping the fast,

performing the ritual prayers, and carrying out all the other acts of worshipful obedience [*ṭā'āt*] that Allāh has commanded you to perform.” You must subject it to watchful supervision. Then, if you keep this up, the evil part of it will die, and only its good part will survive. Feed it on lawful food [*ḥalāl*], for then it will lose its vital spark. You should never feel that you can trust it, however, because hypocrisy [*nifāq*] is its normal habit and its favorite pastime. It will perform the prayers, keep the fast, and put up with all kinds of hardship, until it hears its praises on the lips of fellow creatures, and mention of it made in places where people congregate.

[As the saying goes:] “He who has not seen a successful person [*muflīḥ*] will never succeed.”<sup>118</sup> When the heart of the believing servant has been purified of the filth of ostentation [*riyā'*] and hypocrisy [*nifāq*], two cycles of ritual prayer [*rak'atān*] performed by him are worth far more than a thousand cycles of prayer performed by someone whose heart has not been purified of those two vices. O hypocrite [*munāfiq*], all your hypocrisy stems from your lower self [*nafs*]. You must cut your lower self off from its means of support, and turn to its Creator, for then its evil tendency will come to a stop. The lower self requires education and professional training, so that it can learn to carry your baggage and become fit for useful work. As it is now, it cannot carry a big load. You must train it while it is small, for it is not yet capable of carrying you or your baggage. There is nothing else for it. You must train it, improve it by degrees, and move it along from one stage of development to the next, until it is completely tame, so that it is capable of carrying your equipment and walking beneath your weight through the wastelands and the desert.

You are so enamoured [*āshiq*] of your own lower self that you are quite incapable of resisting its demands. It leads you wherever it wishes, day

<sup>118</sup> Shaikh 'Abd al-Qādir (may Allāh be well pleased with him) was fond of quoting this saying. For instance, in the Sixth Discourse of *The Sublime Revelation [al-Faṭḥ ar-Rabbānī]* (pp. 55–56) of the translation published by Al-Baz), we find the following passage:

Endeavor to observe a successful person [*muflīḥ*], so that you may succeed by applying his method [*ṭarīq*]. According to one of the wise (may Allāh have mercy upon him): “He who has not seen a successful person will never succeed.” You do see one who is successful, but you see him with the eyes in your head, not with the eyes of your heart, your innermost being and your faith. Faith you do not possess, so you will surely have no insight with which to examine someone other than yourself. As Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) has said:

For indeed it is not the eyes that are blind, but blind are the hearts within the bosoms. (22:46)

in and day out. Your death may come and snatch you away at any moment, but you have no qualms about putting things off till the morrow [*taswīf*]. You say: “Today I shall repent. Well, tomorrow I shall repent. I shall devote myself to obeying my Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He). I shall prove that I am truly sorry for my sins. I shall do this and that and the other.” But while you are going on like this, in the throes of your delusion, along comes death to snatch you away. It will come upon you by surprise, so you cannot escape from it. All your debts, your sins and your acts of disobedience will be left in your debit column. Woe unto you! You are busy amassing one gold coin [*dīnār*] on top of another gold coin, and there seems to be no end to the process of amassing them. But all of this will turn into scorpions that will sting you and snakes that will bite you. Gold and silver coins are nothing but a hoard of cares [*ad-danānīr wa ’d-darāhim dār hamm*]. This world is full of distractions [*ashghāl*], and the hereafter is full of terrors [*ahwāl*], while the servant [of Allāh] is between the two, until it is decided where his final residence shall be—in the Garden of Paradise or in the Fire of Hell.

You must not consume anything without knowing its source and its derivation. The consumption of unlawful food [*ḥarām*] results in the darkening of the heart. As long as someone is completely lacking in patience, how can he eat only lawful food [*ḥalāl*]? No one is going to eat only lawful food, unless he is capable of persevering with patience in waging war on the lower self [*nafs*], the passions [*hawā*] and the Devil [*Shaiṭān*]. The patient warrior is the one who eats only lawful food.

O Allāh, sustain us with lawful food, and keep us far removed from food that is unlawful. Sustain us with the blessings of Your gracious favor, Your goodness and Your nearness. Sustain our hearts, our innermost beings [*asrār*] and our physical bodies with those same blessings. Āmīn.



## The Fourteenth Discourse

**O** servants of Allāh! Be sensible, and make a serious effort to get to know the One you serve [*Ma' būd*] before death comes to you. Ask Him to supply your needs, both by day and by night. To put a request to Him is an act of worshipful service [*'ibāda*], whether He gives or does not give you what you ask for. You must not harbor doubts about Him. Do not get impatient for a response, and do not get bored with asking. Put your requests to Him with an attitude of humble submission, and do not remonstrate with Him if you do not receive an immediate response, for He is more Aware [*A' lam*] of your best interests than you are.

You must listen to these words. You must grasp their meaning and put them into practice. These words of mine are on a straight highway. They are the words of a man who has passed the test of experience [*mujarrab*].

What a pity for you, that you should die without having come to know your Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He). How unfortunate for you, that you should arrive in the presence of One with whom you have never had any dealings, of One with whom you have never done business, of One to whom you have not offered hospitality, and have therefore not been nourished by the memory of entertaining Him. You must do business with Him, for that will be a profitable transaction for you! Establish credit with Him before you arrive in His presence. Be generous to the poor and the needy, for then you will establish credit with Him. Let them share some part of your goods, for then you will establish credit with Him. If you do this, He will treat you generously and grant you His favor both in this world and in the hereafter.

This property you hold in your possession does not really belong to you. It is a deposit entrusted to your custody. It is meant to be shared between you and the poor. Do not try to appropriate the deposit you hold in trust for its Owner, for He may remove it from your control. Whenever one of you cooks a pot of food, he must not eat from it alone.

He must share the meal with his neighbor, with the beggar who comes to his door, and with the guest to whom he offers hospitality. Beggars should never be turned away, as long as one has the capacity for making them welcome and giving them something to eat. To turn them away will cause one to suffer the loss of blessings. The Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) is reported as having said:

If someone turns the beggar away from his door, without having a valid excuse to offer, the guardian angels [*malā'ikat al-ḥifẓ*] will not come near his door for forty mornings.

You have disgraced your tongues! At the very moment when those poor beggars appear on the scene, Allāh is ready to enrich you and assist you. But you turn them away, even though you could in fact give them something. How can you be sure that He will not make life easier for them, and more difficult for you?

Woe unto you! You used to be poor. You did not possess as much as a single atom, but then Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) made you rich. He abolished your poverty and multiplied your benefits and blessings beyond your reckoning. Then He sent a poor man to you. He referred him to you, so that you might share with him part of what He had given to you. But you turn him away empty-handed and do not accept His assignment. The time is now close at hand, when Allāh will remove from your possession everything that He has given you. He will cause you to revert to your former state of poverty and beggary. He will instill a hardness toward you in the hearts of your fellow creatures, while endowing you with little strength to bear it.

O Allāh, grant us the blessings of conscious awareness [*yaqāza*] before death, of repentance [*tawba*] before death, of right guidance [*hidāya*] before death, of direct knowledge [*ma'rifa*] before death, of doing business [*mu'āmalā*] with You and resorting to Your door before death, and of admittance to the abode of Your nearness before death. Āmīn.



## The Fifteenth Discourse <sup>119</sup>

**O** young man! Grasp in your hand the sword of the affirmation of Divine Unity [*tawḥīd*] and the shield of pious restraint [*warāʿ*]. Mount the steed of your honesty [*ṣidq*] and your purpose [*irāda*], and launch the attack of your sincerity [*ikhhlās*] against the lower self [*nafs*], the passions [*hawā*], the urges of nature [*ṭabʿ*], the idolatrous worship of creatures [*shirk biʿl-khalq*], this world [*dunyā*] and the devil [*shaiṭān*], for help and support will then come to you from Allāh (Exalted is He).

The people [of the Lord] kept their own lower selves [*anfus*] imprisoned. They made do with very little, until they reached the stage of having very much. They could see the robes of honor that had been made ready for them, hanging on the pegs of destiny [*qadar*], so they patiently made the best they could out of rags and tatters, until such time as they would receive the shares of this world and the hereafter that had been prepared for them.

When the heart abstains from everything apart from the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He), it moves out into the deserts of direct experience [*maʿ rifa*] and the wilderness of knowledge [*ʿilm*]. It comes to rest in the camp site of safety [*amān*] from all that is apart from Him, so it enjoys immunity from sinful rebellion, from obedience to the devil and opposition to the All-Merciful [*ar-Raḥmān*].

O you who are in such a great hurry, you must hold your ground!

O you who are so eager for things to arrive before their time is due, you must not be so stupid! Surely you must have heard the saying of the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace):

Haste is from the devil, while an unhurried pace is from the All-Merciful.<sup>120</sup>

<sup>119</sup> The passages printed in ordinary (non-bold) Jilani font are also to be found—with only minor differences almost entirely explicable as due to mistakes by the copyist of *Jalāʾ al-Khawātir*—in the Sixty-second Discourse of Shaikh ʿAbd al-Qādir’s work *The Sublime Revelation* [*al-Faṭḥ ar-Rabbānī*]. (See p. 461 of the translation published by Al-Baz.)

<sup>120</sup> *al-ʿajalatu mina ʿsh-shaiṭān—at-tuʿadatu mina ʿr-Raḥmān.*

This is so because of His knowledge of our best interests.

When someone loves Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), that person no longer has a will of his own, because the lover [*muḥibb*] can have no will of his own in the company of his Beloved [*Maḥbūb*], since he is just like the slave in the presence of his master. The slave is in bondage to his master. He cannot contradict his master. He cannot oppose his master in anything at all. Woe unto you! You are neither a lover nor a loved one. You have experienced neither the taste of loving [*maḥabba*] nor the taste of being loved [*maḥbūbiyya*]. The lover is restless and wary, while the loved one is calm. The lover is in a state of distress, while the loved one is in a state of composure. You lay claim to love, yet you go to sleep and forget about your Beloved. As Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) has said in one of His revealed utterances:

A liar is he who claims to love Me, yet who goes to sleep and forgets Me as soon as the night sets in.<sup>121</sup>

[As for the people of the Lord,] there are those among them who never go to sleep, except when sleep overtakes them suddenly with irresistible force, so that they doze off while they are bowing in prostration [*sujūd*]. The Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) is reported as having said:

When the servant falls asleep during his prostration, Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) commends him to His angels, saying: “See how his spirit is here with Me, while his body is there before Me, engaged in obedient service to Me.”

If a worshipper is suddenly overwhelmed by sleep while performing his ritual prayer [*ṣalāt*], he is still considered to be engaged in his prayer, because he was committed by intention [*niyya*] to performing the prayer, when the sudden drowsiness came upon him and overwhelmed him irresistibly. The Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He) does not pay attention to the outer form; He looks only at the intention and the inner content [*ma‘nā*].

When the knower [*‘ārīf*] abstains from the hereafter, he says to it: “Get out of my way, for I am seeking the door of the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He). Both you and this world are one as far as I am concerned. This world used to screen me off from you, and now you are screening me

<sup>121</sup> *kadhaba mani ‘dda’ā maḥabbatī idbā janna ‘l-lailu nāma ‘annī.*



off from my Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He). No respect is due to anyone who tries to screen me off from Him.”

You must hear what is being said to you now, for it is the essence [*lubb*] of the knowledge [*‘ilm*] of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), the essence of what He wishes from His creatures and for His creatures, namely the spiritual state [*ḥāl*] of the Prophets [*anbiyā’*], the Messengers [*mursalūn*], the saints [*awliyā’*] and the righteous [*ṣāliḥūn*]. O slaves of this world, O slaves of the hereafter, you are ignorant of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), of this lower world of His and of His other world. You are solid walls. Each of you has an idol [*ṣanam*]. You there, your idol is this world. And you, your idol is the hereafter. As for you, creatures are your idol. Then in your case, the desires and pleasures of the flesh are your idol, while in yours the idol is praise and applause and popular acceptance. Everything apart from Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) is an idol. The people [of the Lord] wish only for His countenance.

Woe unto you! The Resurrection [*Qiyāma*] is very close to you. The space is no more than the gap between high tide and low tide. It is no more than the space between taking a nap and waking up. It is no more than the space between stepping back and stepping forward. Surely the dawn [*ṣubḥ*] is close at hand! The Day of Resurrection is the day of triumph for those who are truly devout, the day of rejoicing for those who are truly devout.

The truly devout [*muttaqūn*] are those who are devoted to their duty to Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) both in their private moments and in their public lives, in times of ease and prosperity and in times of suffering and hardship, when things are to their liking and also in situations that are very unpleasant for them. They are the servants of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) and His men of valor. They are the men of valor [*rijāl*] and the heroes [*abṭāl*]. They are the chieftains [*sāda*] and the leaders [*ru’asā’*]. They possess not only the foundation of faith [*īmān*], but its superstructure as well. They are always on their guard against associating partners with Allāh [*shirk*] and against hypocrisy [*nifāq*], both outwardly [*ẓāhiran*] and inwardly [*bāṭinan*]. They practice detachment from this world and their fellow creatures, and they refuse to gratify the inclinations of their lower selves [*aghṛād an-nufūs*].

You will not attain to the degree of nearness to Allāh (Almighty and

Glorious is He) until you are ready to let go of all that is apart from Him. You will not reach that level as long as you are so tight-fisted with your worldly goods. If you donate some of them to charitable causes, the desire to cling to things in your possession will be dissipated. Whenever one of our righteous predecessors found that he had some food at his disposal, he would say to his servant: “Take this food to the home of that poor man,” mentioning the person by name.

Woe unto you! Have you no sense of shame? When the time comes for you to pay the alms-due [*zakāt*], you produce the gold of the most inferior quality that you have in your possession. You produce low-grade silver instead of the genuine kind, and silver instead of jewels. If you have something that is actually worth a whole *dīnār* [gold coin], you maintain that its value is only half that much, in order to minimize your obligation to the poor. If you happen to have some food at your disposal, you donate the most unappetizing part of it to charity, while you eat the tastiest part of it yourself. You are the worshipful servant of your own lower self [*‘ābid nafsik*]. You are quite incapable of resisting its demands. You are the obedient follower of your passionate desires [*hawā*], your devil [*shaiṭān*] and your evil companions.

The truly devout [*muttaqūn*] are the cream of the crop [*sarāt al-‘ashā’ ir*]. They are one in a thousand.

You must not overstep the bounds of proper behavior. Allāh will not receive any of you into His presence, apart from someone who is pure. No one may sit at His table unless he is clean. No meat may be served at His table, unless it has been slaughtered by the hand of a person devoted to righteousness [*ṣāhib at-taqwā*]. He will not accept the carrion flesh of a person who is only interested in creatures and things of this world. Meat that has not been properly slaughtered [according to the requirements of Islamic law], the flesh of the donkey, and the idolatrous worship of creatures and material means [*ashāb*], all constitute contaminated food [*najas*].

Our Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He) will accept only that which is offered with the intention of earning His good pleasure. Do not talk about things that do not concern you. Keep yourselves fully occupied with what He has commanded you to do (Almighty and Glorious is He). Do not waste what little time you have. Fulfill your duty to your Lord

(Almighty and Glorious is He) and turn to Him in repentance. If a person is truly devoted to his Lord, He will protect him and promote him to the door of His nearness. He will promote him to the way of life that is everlasting. He will promote him from low to high. He will promote him to the Seventh Heaven.

The time is now very near when you must experience the Resurrection. You will see how Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) will gather His truly devoted servants in the shade of His throne [*‘arsh*], and how He will seat them at tables where martyrs [*shuhadā’*] are seated, as well as certain people who were drowned at sea. As they sit at those tables, they will take great delight in the company of their fellow creatures and in every aspect of their situation. One set of people will be transported to the Gardens of Paradise, while another set will be carried away to the Fire of Hell. As they [the fortunate ones] sit there at those tables, the dwellings assigned to them in the Garden of Paradise will come within their view, and they will catch sight of their wives and their attendants, for these will be made visible to them even before they actually arrive at their destination.

There is not one true believer [*mu’min*] who will not have the veil removed from his eyes at the moment of death, so that he can see what belongs to him in the Garden of Paradise. The houries [*ḥūr*] will beckon to him, as will the young attendants. Some of the delights of the Garden of Paradise will present themselves to him, so death and its pangs [*sakarāt*] will actually be a pleasant experience for him. The Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He) will treat such people as He treated Pharaoh’s wife Āsiya (may Allāh bestow His mercy upon her). When Pharaoh realized that she was a believer [*mu’mina*] in Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), he gave orders for iron spikes to be driven through her hands and feet, and had her lashed with whips. Then the veil was removed from her eyes and the gates of heaven were opened wide for her, so she could see the Garden of Paradise and all that it contained. She saw that the angels were building a house for her there, so she said:

My Lord, build for me, in Your presence, a house in Paradise. (66:11)<sup>122</sup>

Then the angel of death came to her to take her spirit [*rūḥ*], and he said to her: “This house belongs to you!” So she laughed as the agony of the torture left her. Pharaoh exclaimed: “Did I not tell you that she was quite

<sup>122</sup> Rabbi ‘bni lī ‘indaka baitan fi ‘l-jannati.

insane [*majnūna*]? Can you not see how she is laughing, even while she is suffering this torture?” Just like Āsiya (may Allāh bestow His mercy upon her), at the moment of death these believers will see what is there for them in the presence of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He). There are some amongst them who will know about this even before the time of death. They are the ones who are drawn near [to Allāh] [*muqarrabūn*], the ones who are singled out [*mufradūn*], the ones who are sought after [*murādūn*].

You must work for the sake of Allāh. Do not neglect to keep the fast [*ṣiyām*] and perform the ritual prayer [*ṣalāt*], while making sure that the performance of these and all good deeds is accompanied by sincere devotion [*ikhhlās*]. You must be careful to observe the external requirements [of Islām], since putting them into practice [*amal*] will convey you to the valley of knowledge [*ilm*], to the door of your Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He), by the steps of faith [*īmān*] and conviction [*īqān*]. Then you will see that which no eye has ever seen, of which no ear has ever heard, and the very notion of which has never occurred to the human heart.

Listen well, O hearts! Listen well, O you who have reached maturity! Listen well, O sensible ones! The Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He) has not spoken to callow youths; He has spoken only to mature adults. He has not spoken to our lower selves [*nufūs*]; He has spoken only to our hearts [*qulūb*]. The believers [*mu'minūn*] have heard His speech, while those who attribute partners to Him [*mushrikūn*] have been deaf to His speech.

O Allāh, arouse us from the slumber of our heedlessness. Shield us in all our circumstances. Shield us whether they be good or bad. Do not involve us in dealings with anyone other than You, whether they be laudable or shameful; not if such dealings would be praiseworthy, in case we should become conceited, and not if they would be shameful, in case we should disgrace ourselves. So let it be neither this nor that! Āmīn.



## The Sixteenth Discourse

**T**he following words were spoken by Shaikh ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jilānī (may Allāh be well pleased with him, and may He enable us to benefit from his knowledge—Āmīn):

As far as most of you are concerned, I notice that when you see something bad you make it widely known, but that when you see something good you keep it a secret. You must not act like this. Are you not authorized agents [*wukalā’*], charged with taking care of your fellow human beings? You must lodge people under the protective shelter of Allāh. You must leave people free from your control. It is with their Lord that they will have to settle their accounts. If you were really aware of the Creator (Almighty and Glorious is He), you would treat His creatures with compassion and overlook their faults. If you were really aware of Him, you would have nothing to do with any other. If you were really aware of His door, your hearts would turn away from the door of anyone other than Him. If you recognized Him as the source of blessings, you would give thanks to Him and forget about thanking anyone else.

Put your requests to Him, and not to any other. Affirm His Unity, for then you will be unified. He who affirms the divine Unity will experience unification [*man waḥḥada tawaḥḥada*]. He who seeks, and strives, will find [*man ṭalaba wa jadda wajada*]. If someone surrenders [*aslama*] and obediently submits [*istaslama*] to Him, that person will be safe and sound [*salima*]. If someone complies with His will [*wāḥḥaqa*], he will be helped to succeed [*wuḥḥiqa*]. But if anyone quarrels with destiny [*qadar*], he will be dealt a mortal blow. When Pharaoh quarreled with destiny and wanted Allāh’s foreknowledge [*‘ilm*] to be altered, He shattered him and drowned him in the sea, and caused Moses and Aaron to survive him.

When the mother of Moses (peace be upon him) was afraid of the butchers appointed by Pharaoh to slaughter every newborn child, Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) let her know by way of inspiration

[*alhamahā*] that she must cast him into the river, but she feared for his safety, so she was told:

Do not be afraid, and do not grieve, for We shall bring him back to you, and We shall make him one of the Messengers. (28:7)<sup>123</sup>

[In other words:] “Do not be afraid, for your heart will be reassured, and your innermost being [*sirr*] will be set at rest. Do not be afraid that he may drown and perish, for We shall restore him to you. Through him We shall turn your poverty into affluent wealth.” She therefore prepared an ark [*tābūt*] for him, laid him inside it, and cast it into the river. Then it floated on the surface of the water until it reached the palace, where it was brought ashore by Pharaoh’s maidservants and his wife Āsiya. As soon as they opened the ark, they saw that it contained a baby boy. They all loved him, and their hearts were filled with compassion for him, so they rubbed him with oil, then changed his underwear and gave him a new gown. He became one of the dearest of creatures to Āsiya and her maidservants, and he was loved by every member of Pharaoh’s retinue who happened to set eyes upon him. This explains the meaning of these words of Allāh (Exalted is He):

And I bestowed upon you love from Me. (20:39)<sup>124</sup>

It has been said that anyone who looked him in the eye was sure to love him. Then He restored him to his mother and brought him up in the palace, in defiance of the will of Pharaoh, who had proved to be incapable of causing his destruction. When someone has been chosen and reared by the Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He) for Himself, how could anyone destroy him? How could anyone slaughter him? How could the water drown him? He is held in His safekeeping and speaks with Him directly. When someone is loved by the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He), who could hate him? Who could do him any harm? Who would be capable of leaving him in the lurch? Who could make him rich? Who could reduce him to poverty? Who could promote him to higher rank? Who would be capable of demoting him to lower status? Who could appoint him? Who would be capable of dismissing him from office? Who could bring him near? Who would be capable of keeping him at a distance?

<sup>123</sup> *wa lā taḥzanī: innā rāddūbu ilaiki wa jā'ilūbu mina 'l-mursalīn.*

<sup>124</sup> *wa alqaitu 'alaika maḥabbatan minnī.*

O Allāh, open unto us the door of Your nearness. Include us among the people who are dedicated to Your obedient service, among those who are wholly devoted to You, and among Your soldiers. Let us sit at the mat where the meal of Your gracious favor is spread, and let us quench our thirst with the drink of Your intimate friendship [*uns*].

Give us in this world good, and good in the hereafter, and guard us against the torment of the fire! (2:201)<sup>125</sup>



<sup>125</sup> *ātinā fi 'd-dunyā ḥasanatan wa fi 'l-ākhirati ḥasanatan wa qinā 'adbāba 'n-nār.*

## The Seventeenth Discourse <sup>126</sup>

**O** servants of Allāh! Beware of injustice [*ẓulm*], for it will result in darkness and gloom [*ẓulumāt*] on the Day of Resurrection. Injustice causes both the heart and the face to turn completely dark. Beware of the prayer of supplication offered by one who has been treated unjustly [*mazlūm*]. Beware of the tears shed by one who has suffered injustice, and of the fire that burns in the heart of the victim of oppression. The believer [*mu' min*] does not die until he has seen vengeance inflicted on his oppressor [*ẓālim*], until he has witnessed his death, the blackness of mourning at his door, the orphanhood of his children, the seizure of his material possessions, and the transfer of his authority to someone else.

When the believer [*mu' min*] has come to be alive at heart [*qalbī*], the most likely prospect for him is that judgment will not be given against him, but in his favor; that he will not be treated with contempt, but rather with consideration; that allowances will be made to his advantage, rather than to his disadvantage. His sanctuary [*ḥarīm*] will not be violated. He will not suffer humiliation, nor will he be subjected to the control of tyrants [*ẓalama*].

A few individuals still have the remnants of sins attached to them, so they must undergo purification through trials and tribulations in the hereafter. There will be stages of development for them in the hereafter.

You will not go astray as long as you practice strict observance of the law [*ihkām al-ḥukm*], along with a readiness to accept the divine decree [*qadā'*], and regular performance of righteous works under all circumstances, in hardship and in ease, when things are to your liking and also

<sup>126</sup> The passages printed in ordinary (non-bold) Jilani font are also to be found—with only minor differences almost entirely explicable as due to mistakes by the copyist of *Jalā' al-Khawātir*—in the Sixty-second Discourse of Shaikh 'Abd al-Qādir's work *The Sublime Revelation [al-Faṭḥ ar-Rabbānī]*. (See pp. 462–63 of the translation published by Al-Baz.)



when they are unpleasant for you. The Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) is reported as having said:

**If someone is not content to accept the decree of Allāh, there is no remedy for his stupidity. That which He has decreed will surely come to pass, whether His servant approves or disapproves.**

Woe unto you, O you who resist the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He)! Cut out that useless ranting and raving. No one can reverse the decree of destiny [*qaḍā'*] and no one can deflect it. Submit [*sallim*] and you will find peace. This night and this day, is it possible for you to turn them back? When the night comes it will set in whether you are happy about it or not, and the same applies to the day. Each of them takes its course without reference to you, and so it is with the decree [*qaḍā'*] of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) and His destiny [*qadar*], whether to your advantage or to your disadvantage. When the night of poverty comes, you must submit and say goodbye to the day of affluence. When the night of sickness comes, you must submit and say goodbye to the day of good health. When the night of what you dislike comes, you must submit and say goodbye to the day of what you like. You must welcome with a tranquil heart the night of sicknesses, ailments, poverty and disgrace. Do not reject any part of the decree of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), for if you do so you will perish, your faith [*īmān*] will be lost, your heart will be thrown into murky confusion, and your innermost being [*sirr*] will die. As Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) has said in one of His Books:

I am the One God [*Allāh*], except for Whom there is none worthy of worship [*ilāh*]. If someone submits obediently [*istaslama*] to My decree, endures My tribulation with patience, and gives thanks for My blessings, I shall record Him in My presence as a champion of the truth [*ṣiddīq*] **and I shall resurrect him in the company of the champions of the truth.** And if someone does not submit obediently to My decree, does not endure My tribulation with patience, and does not give thanks for My blessings, then let him seek a Lord [*Rabb*] apart from Me.<sup>127</sup>

If you are not willing to accept the decree, if you do not endure the tribulation with patience, and if you do not give thanks for the gracious blessings, then you have no Lord. You may try to find some other Lord

<sup>127</sup> *Ana 'llāhu lā ilāha illā Ana—mani 'staslama li-qaḍā'ī wa ṣabara 'alā balā'ī wa shakara 'alā na'mā'ī katabtubu 'indī ṣiddīqan wa ḥashartubu mā'a 's-ṣiddīqin—wa man lam yastaslim li-qaḍā'ī wa lam yaṣbir 'alā balā'ī wa lam yashkur 'alā na'mā'ī fa'l-yaṭlub Rabban siwāya.*

instead of Him, but there is no other Lord besides Him. If you wish [for Him], you must be willing to accept the decree [*qadā'*] and believe in destiny [*qadar*], both the good parts of it and the bad, both the sweet parts of it and the bitter. You must also believe that what has fallen to your lot could not have been avoided by taking precautions, and that what has passed you by could not have been made to come your way, however diligently you sought to acquire it.

When faith [*īmān*] has become a reality [*taḥaqquq*] for you, you will move forward to the door of saintship [*wilāya*], for at this stage you will have come to be one of those servants of Allāh who really carry out their servitude [*'ubūdiyya*] to Him. The distinctive feature of the saint [*walī*] is that he is ready to comply with the wishes of his Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He) under all circumstances. He becomes total compliance [*muwāfaqa*], with no question of why or how, while always carrying out the commandments and observing the prohibitions [of the sacred law]. There can be no doubt that he will always enjoy His fellowship. He will proceed in the company of His nearness, turning neither to right nor left and never going backwards, but only straight ahead. He will come to be a front without a back, a nearness with no remoteness, a pure serenity with no murky confusion, a goodness with no evil.

**You have not yet mastered Islām, so how can you be a true believer [*mu'min*]? You have not yet mastered conviction [*īqān*], so how can you be one who knows by experience [*'arīf*], a saint [*walī*], a spiritual deputy [*badal*]? You have not yet mastered the knowledge [*'ilm*] of direct experience [*ma'rifa*], sainthood [*wilāya*] and spiritual deputyship [*badaliyya*], so how can you be a lover [*muhibb*] whose own existence has ceased to be? You call yourself a Muslim, even though the Book and the Sunna have rendered judgment against you, since you have failed to put their law [*ḥukm*] into practice, and you have not followed them obediently. Anyone who seeks Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) will surely find Him. If someone makes a serious effort to serve His cause, He will surely guide that person in the right path, because He has said in the unambiguous wording [*muḥkam*] of His Book:**

As for those who strive in Our cause, We shall surely guide them in Our paths. (29:69)<sup>128</sup>

<sup>128</sup> *wa 'lladhīna jābadū finā la-nabdiyannabum subulanā.*

He is no wrongful tyrant [*ẓālim*], and He does not love injustice [*ẓulm*]. As He has said (Exalted is He):

Allāh is never unjust to His servants. (3:182)<sup>129</sup>

Allāh (Exalted is He) will give something for nothing, so how could He fail to give in return for something? As He has said (Almighty and Glorious is He):

Is the reward of goodness anything but goodness? (55:60)<sup>130</sup>

If a person does his work well in this world, Allāh will treat him well in both this world and the hereafter. What prevents you from obeying Him and affirming His Oneness, except your sins, your ignorance, and the ruinous condition of your homes and your sanctuaries? You will soon experience remorse. You must hear the verses [*āyāt*] of the Qur'ān with the ears of your hearts. Turn again to Him and leave every other door. Cling to the door of your Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He). He is the Remover of harm [*Kāshif ad-darr*]. He is the One who responds to the plea of the needy. Be patient with Him, for then you will experience all that is good. Give thanks to Him when He answers your prayer, and be patient with Him when He delays His response to you. Courage is an hour's patience [*ash-shajā'a ṣabr sā'a*].

O Allāh, O Remover of harm and affliction, remove from us our harm and our affliction, for You respond to the plea of the needy. O "Doer of whatever He will" (11:107),<sup>131</sup> O Capable of all things, O Knower of all things, You are the One who knows our needs, and You are the One who can fulfill them. You are the One who knows our faults, and You are the One who can erase them and forgive them. Do not leave us at the mercy of anyone but You! Do not entrust us to the care of anyone but You! Do not send us to the door of anyone other than You! Do not make us turn to anyone other than You! Āmīn.



<sup>129</sup> *wa anna 'llāba laisa bi-ẓallāmin li'l-'abid.*

<sup>130</sup> *bal jazā'u 'l-iḥsāni illa 'l-iḥsān.*

<sup>131</sup> *Fa'ālun li-mā yurīd.*

## The Eighteenth Discourse

O my people! You must try to reach the point of steadfast commitment to the worshipful service [*'ibāda*] of your Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He), for He comes to those who stand obedient [*qānitīn*] before Him. The Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) is reported as having said:

Whenever the servant stands for a long time in the presence of his Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He), dutifully performing his ritual prayer [*ṣalāt*], his sins are scattered away, just as the dry leaves are scattered from the trees on the day when a strong wind blows. And whenever the servant is genuinely sincere in obedience to his Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He), his sins are scattered and cleared away from him, both from the outside [*ẓāhir*] and from the inside [*bāṭin*]. His heart is filled with light, and his innermost being [*sirr*] becomes pure and serene.

You must be correct [*ṣaḥīḥ*]. You must be eloquent [*faṣīḥ*]. You must be correct in your private life. You must be eloquent in your public life. If you are correct in this world, you will be correct in the hereafter. You must also be eloquently outspoken in the presence of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He). You must plead with Him on behalf of your fellows, for He will accept your intercession in favor of any of His creatures whom He may wish to bless. After granting His permission and issuing His command, He will give effect to your request, as a miraculous gift of grace [*karāma*] to you, in order to give visible proof of the position you occupy in His sight. You must be correct in the relationship that exists between you and Him. You must be eloquent in giving instruction to His creatures, for whose sake you must become a teacher [*mu' allim*] and an educator [*mu' addib*].

Woe unto you! You sit up here and preach to the people, then you mingle with them to laugh and tell funny stories. There can be no doubt that neither you nor they will prosper. The preacher [*wā'iz*] is an instructor and an educator, while those in his audience are like young children.

A youngster will not study unless one is tough with him and treats him firmly and sternly. There are no more than a few individuals among them who can keep up their studies without this kind of treatment, being gifted with a special talent [*mawhiba*] from Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He).<sup>132</sup>

O my people! This world is transitory [*fāniya*]. This world is nothing but shackles and beatings, cares and woes, and a veil between you and your Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He). You must look at it with the eyes of your heart, not the eyes of your head. The eye of the heart looks at the inner contents [*ma' ānī*], while the eye of the head looks at the outer form [*ṣūra*].

The true believer [*mu' min*] belongs entirely to Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He). Not a single atom of his being belongs to creatures. Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) is in charge of both his outer [*ẓāhir*] and his inner [*bāṭin*]. He makes no movement except because of Him, and he does not come to rest except because of Him, for he has his being entirely because of Him [*bi-Hi*], from Him [*min-Hu*], and in Him [*fi-Hi*]. With footsteps firm he has trodden the path to His door, while they were too sound asleep to notice, and there he stands at His service.

As for all of you, you have devoted your attention to the acquisition and procurement of your allotted shares of worldly goods, driven by greed and ambition. You have quite forgotten about death and that which lies beyond it. You have forgotten the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He) and His power to bring about change and transformation. You have left Him out of sight behind your external appearances. You have turned your backs on Him and settled for the company of this world, creatures, and material means [*asbāb*]. Most of you are worshipping this world and your money, while neglecting the worshipful service [*ibāda*] of the Creator and Provider [*al-Khāliq ar-Rāziq*].

All of these disasters and calamities are brought about by your own lower selves [*nufūs*], so it is incumbent upon you to keep them in confinement inside the prison of strenuous exertions [*mujāhadāt*]. You must cut off their supply of raw materials, by preventing them from gaining access to any of the things that give them pleasure. You must keep them cut off from their supplies, until they can imagine nothing

<sup>132</sup> This paragraph, printed in ordinary (non-bold) Jilani font, is also to be found—with only minor differences almost certainly due to mistakes by the copyist of *Jalā' al-Khawāṭir*—in the Sixty-second Discourse of Shaikh 'Abd al-Qādir's work *The Sublime Revelation [al-Faḥḥ ar-Rabbānī]*. (See pp. 464–65 of the translation published by Al-Baz.)

more desirable than a crumb of dry bread and a swig of water. This should be all the food they get to satisfy their appetites. If you fatten them up with all sorts of juicy treats, they will devour you too. You will then be in the situation described by a certain righteous man, who once said: "If you let your dog grow fat, it will devour you."<sup>133</sup> What good can be expected of the lower self? Allāh (Exalted is He) has said concerning it:

Surely the self is always inciting to evil, except inasmuch as my Lord has mercy. (12:53)<sup>134</sup>

O my people, take heed and remember!

Only those with powers of understanding will ever take heed (39:9)<sup>135</sup>

The people [of the Lord] are those with powers of understanding [*ulu 'l-albāb*]. They grasped the true significance of this world, and so they have abstained from it. Then they grasped the significance of the hereafter, so they entered into it, until its trees sprouted for them and its rivers flowed for them, and it was theirs to enjoy in wakefulness and in sleep. But then they came to feel the love of the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He), so they got up and left it and traveled beyond it. They tightened the girdles of their hearts and set forth in the direction of the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He). They came to be numbered among those who seek His countenance, and who wish for nothing other than Him. You must look for the blessing of these people [of the Lord]. You must seek them out and then become their servants. Approach them and take shelter in their company.

O Allāh, grant that we may be well behaved in Your company under all circumstances, and in the company of the righteous [*ṣālihīn*] among Your servants, and:

Give us in this world good, and good in the hereafter, and guard us against the torment of the fire! (2:201)<sup>136</sup>

<sup>133</sup> Shaikh 'Abd al-Qādir (may Allāh be well pleased with him) has given a similar warning in the Eighteenth Discourse of *The Sublime Revelation [al-Faṭḥ ar-Rabbānī]*. (See p. 135 of the translation published by Al-Baz):

Do not fatten your lower selves [*nufūs*], for they will devour you. Just as when someone takes a wild dog, looks after it and fattens it, the beast will surely devour him when he is with it alone. Do not give free rein to your lower selves, or sharpen their knives, because they will throw you into the ravines of perdition and betray you. Deprive them of the things they love, and do not give them scope for their desires.

<sup>134</sup> *inna 'n-nafsa la-ammāratun bi's-sū'i illā mā raḥima Rabbī.*

<sup>135</sup> *innamā yataḍbakkaru ulu 'l-albāb.*

<sup>136</sup> *ātīnā fi 'd-dunyā ḥasanatan wa fi 'l-ākhirati ḥasanatan wa qinā 'adbāba 'n-nār.*

## The Nineteenth Discourse <sup>137</sup>

**Y**ou had better sit up and take notice, O slave of this world, O slave of creatures, O slave of [status symbols like] the robe and the turban, of the *dīnār* and the *dirham* [gold and silver coins], and of praise and blame. Woe unto you! The whole of you is devoted to this world. The whole of you is dedicated to something other than your Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He) and His worshipful service [*‘ibāda*]. All those who possesses an intelligent mind [*‘aql*], an inner content [*lubb*] and a faculty of discrimination [*taḥṣīl*], will surely worship their Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He) and will always turn to Him for guidance in matters that affect their vital interests. If a person has no intelligence, on the other hand, he will do nothing of the kind. His heart will be transformed into something less than human [*mansūkh*].

The love of this world is ever on the increase. Those who make an outward profession of Islām will actually say, as the unbelievers [*kuffār*] have said:

There is nothing but our life in this world; we die, and we live, and nothing but Time can destroy us. (45:24)<sup>138</sup>

This is what the unbelievers have said, and there are many amongst you who would say the same. They make it obvious, for they express it through the actions that mark their behavior. In my estimation they amount to nothing, they do not even carry the weight of a mosquito's wing, so how significant can they be in the sight of the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He)? They have no intelligence and possess no faculty of discrimination by which to tell the difference between what is harmful and what is beneficial.

<sup>137</sup> The passages printed in ordinary (non-bold) Jilani font are also to be found—with only minor differences almost entirely explicable as due to mistakes by the copyist of *Jalā' al-Khawātir*—in the Sixty-second Discourse of Shaikh 'Abd al-Qādir's work *The Sublime Revelation [al-Faṭḥ ar-Rabbānī]*. (See pp. 465–69 of the translation published by Al-Baz.)

<sup>138</sup> *mā biya illā ḥayātunā 'd-dunyā namūtu wa nahyā wa mā yublikunā illa 'd-dabr.*

**O servants of Allāh, remember death and what lies beyond it! You must remember the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He) and His ways of dealing [*taṣārīf*] with His creation in His Lordliness [*rubūbiyya*] and His Majesty [*‘aẓama*], and you must reflect on this in private, when you have withdrawn from the company of your family and when other eyes have gone off to sleep.**

When the heart is worthy of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), He does not let it stay in the sphere of buying and selling, of trading in material means. He singles it out for special attention, saves it, raises it up from its fallen state, lodges it at His door and lets it sleep in the chamber of His gracious favor.

**O you who have turned away from your Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He)! When the dust has cleared, as will happen very soon, you will see the ruin of your house. The Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He) will expose you to devastation, unless you come back to your senses, wake up and pay attention!**

Woe unto you! The shirt of your Islām is torn to shreds. The robe of your faith [*īmān*] is soiled. You are naked. Your heart is ignorant. Your innermost being [*sirr*] is confused. Your breast is not opened wide to Islām. Your inner [*bāṭin*] is a wasteland while your outer [*ẓāhir*] is flourishing. Your record sheets have all been written on. This world of yours, which you love so much, is about to move away from you, while the grave and the hereafter are coming toward you. Wake up and pay attention to the state of your affairs and what you will soon have to face. Your death may happen today, or even in this very hour, intervening between you and your expectations.

When a person knows what he is seeking, he attaches little importance to what he must sacrifice for it. When someone is sincere [*ṣādiq*] about love, he will not stick with anyone but his beloved. Suppose some creature were to say: “I have heard tell of the Garden of Paradise and the bliss it contains, through the words of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He):

And therein is all that souls desire and eyes find sweet. (43:71)<sup>139</sup>

So what does it cost?” Our reply to him would be: “Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) has said:

Allāh has bought from the believers their persons and their goods, the Garden [of Paradise] being theirs for the price. (9:111)<sup>140</sup>

<sup>139</sup> *wa fibā mā tasbtābībi ‘l-anfusū wa taladbdhu ‘l-a’yūn.*

<sup>140</sup> *inna ‘llāha ‘sbtarā minā ‘l-mu‘minīna anfasabum wa amwālābūm bi-anna labumū ‘l-janna.*



—You must surrender [*sallim*]/self [*naḥs*]/and property, then it will come to be yours.”

Suppose someone else were to say: “I wish to be one of those who seek His countenance. My heart has caught a glimpse of the door of His nearness, and has seen the lovers going into it and coming out of it wearing the robes of honor conferred by the King. So what is the price of entry?” To him we would reply: “You must sacrifice the whole of you. You must give up your carnal appetites and pleasures. You must become so absorbed in Him that you cease to exist [*waʿfna fihi ʿanka*]. You must say goodbye to the Garden of Paradise and all that it contains, and leave it behind. You must say goodbye to the lower self [*naḥs*], to passions [*bawā*] and natural inclinations [*ṭab*]. You must say goodbye to desires both worldly and otherworldly. You must say goodbye to everyone and leave them all behind the back of your heart. Then you may enter, and then you will see things that no eye has ever seen, that no ear has ever heard of, and that have never occurred to any human heart.”

Say: Allāh!, then leave them [to their idle prattling]. (6:92)<sup>141</sup>

[Say:] He who created me, and He guides me. (26:78)<sup>142</sup>

O you who abstain from this world, when your heart moves away from it, seeking the hereafter, say:

He who created me, and He guides me. (26:78)

And you, O seeker of the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He), you who are longing for Him and abstaining from everything apart from Him, when your heart moves away from the door of the Garden of Paradise to go looking for its Master [*Mawlā*], say:

He who created me, and He guides me. (26:78)

You must pay close attention to His guidance [*hidāya*] over the rugged stretches of the path.

**O my people! You must respond to my call, for I am calling you to Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He). You must turn again to your Creator with your hearts. All of you will soon be dead. You must pry open the door of repentance to Him and offer a plea for forgiveness in His**

<sup>141</sup> *quli ʿllāhu thumma dharbum [fi kbawḍibim yalʿabūn].*

<sup>142</sup> *Alladbī khalaqānī fa-Huwa yabḍīn.*

presence. You must be acutely aware of Him. You must realize that you are under the supervision of a Close and Watchful Overseer [*Raqīb Qarīb Shāhid*]. Surely you must have heard His words (Exalted is He):

There is no secret conference of three, but He is the fourth of them, nor of five, but He is the sixth of them, nor of fewer than that or more, but He is with them, wherever they may be. (58:7)<sup>143</sup>

Satisfy your hunger with the food of His love, quench your thirst with the juice of His intimate friendship [*uns*], and look for help in His nearness.

O you who are dead at heart! O you who are firmly seated in hypocritical pretense [*riyā'*], stand up! Stand up before you are cast aside. Stand up before you are destroyed. O you who are firmly seated in the place that is only dry while the tide is low [*makān al-jazr*], stand up before death comes to you. Stand up before the water comes flooding in beneath you. Get up off the ground of your idolatrous polytheism [*shirk*] and move to the ground of your affirmation of Divine Unity [*tawhīd*].

Our Lord, set us up in a trade that will make You well pleased with us.

Our Lord! Do not cause our hearts to stray after You have guided us aright. (3:8)<sup>144</sup>

Do not cause our hearts to incline away from the Truth [*Haqq*]. Do not let them depart from following Your Book and the Sunna of Your Messenger Muḥammad (Allāh bless him and give him peace), and from putting them into practice. Let us not depart from the highroad, from following in the footsteps of the Prophets and Messengers [*al-anbiyā' wa 'l-mursalīn*], the martyrs and the righteous [*ash-shuhadā' wa 'ṣ-ṣāliḥīn*] (may the blessings and peace of Allāh be upon them one and all). Let our spirits be together with their spirits [*arwāḥ*]. Let us enter the abode of Your nearness, in this world and then in the hereafter. Āmīn.



<sup>143</sup> mā yakūnu min najwā thalāthatin illā Huwa rābi'ubum wa lā kbamsatin illā Huwa sādisubum wa lā adnā min dhālika wa lā akthara illā Huwa ma'abum ainamā kānū.

<sup>144</sup> Rabbanā lā tuzigh qulūbanā ba'da idb badaitanā.

## The Twentieth Discourse

If, on the Day of Resurrection [*Yawm al-Qiyāma*], there were any means available to the lovers [of Allāh], by which they could avoid going into the Garden of Paradise, they would not enter therein, because they say: “What have we to do with creation [*takwīn*]? We wish for the Creator [*al-Mukawwin*]. What have we to do with anything that is relatively new [*ḥadīth*]? We wish for the Infinitely Pre-Existent One [*al-Qadīm*]!”

If this heart is sound, it will possess the necessary qualifications, so it will certainly be drawn near to the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He). If it is sound, it will be utterly detached from this world and all creation, so it will be worthy of nearness [to Him].

Woe unto you! I have been standing at the door of the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He) from my childhood until the present time, whereas you have never even seen it. Your heart has seen neither the door nor its Owner. You are in the East, while this to which I am referring is in the West. Come to your senses, then receive an education, and you will see. I have never disregarded my intellect, except when I was at His door, in the company of the élite [*khawāṣṣ*] among His servants. Say: “The trustworthy one has spoken the truth [*ṣadaqa l-amīn*],” and inform your mind accordingly. O friend of Joseph, you must tell about what you have in your possession. You must accept responsibility for what is behind you. You must speak from your heart and your conscience, or else hold your tongue.

You must spend on charitable causes from your own store of precious metals, from your own treasure, from what you have in your own home. But on no account must you steal and spend! You must feed people from your own dish, and let them drink from your own supply of water. The truly experienced believer [*al-mu'min al-ʿarīf*] can always quench his thirst by drinking from a source of water that never runs dry, a well which

he has excavated with the pickaxes of his self-sacrificing efforts [*mujāhadāt*] and his truthfulness [*ṣidq*].

There is no Garden of Paradise before [dealing with] this world, and no getting close to the Garden. The servant [of Allāh] draws close to this world, wishing to possess it all, but then its faults become apparent to him, so he learns to abstain from it, and comes to be satisfied with just enough of it, with no more of it than one cannot possibly do without. That much of it he takes with the hand of the sacred law [*sharʿ*], with dutiful devotion [*taqwā*] and with cautious restraint [*waraʿ*]. That much he accepts from the hand of pious abstinence [*zuhd*], from the hand of the heart [*qalb*], not from the hand of the lower self [*nafs*], the passions [*hawā*] and the devil [*shaiṭān*].

Then, when he has completed this process of development, the Garden of Paradise will come to him, because his abstinence from this world is the price he must pay for the Garden and its bountiful gifts. Once he has caused his heart to enter inside it, as soon as his feet are firmly planted there, and when his innermost being [*sirr*] is firmly in control, all of its affairs will become easy for him, and all of its benefits will become readily available to him. Having achieved this situation, he will notice the men of the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He), for they will be heading in his direction. “Where are you going?” he will ask them, and they will reply: “To the door of the King!” Then they will make him feel the longing to go there too, and they will point him the way to reach it. They will remain detached from the Garden and from all that he is involved in, and they will tell him: “We are numbered among those concerning whom Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) has said:

They seek His countenance [*ḡurūdūna wajhah*]. (6:52).”

The land of the Garden of Paradise will therefore seem too narrow for him, however spacious it may be, and he will try to find a way out of it. He will act like a bird that flutters at the door until it is allowed out of its cage. He will cry: “I feel like a bird that has been confined inside a cage. My heart has come to be inside Your prison, because this world is the prison of the ordinary believer [*muʿmin*], while You are the prison of the believer who has had direct experience [*ʿarīf*].” Thus, in a state of exhaustion, he will leave the Garden behind, and join those people of the Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He) who have passed that way before him.

This is the path of the spiritual wayfarers [*ṭarīq as-sālikīn*]. As for the path of the reformers [*ṭarīq al-mujaddidīn*], the lightning flash [*bāriq*] of nearness [to Allāh] makes them fully experienced at the very first step, without the need for gradual progress by intermediate stages.

O Allāh, bring our hearts near to You, and:

Give us in this world good, and good in the hereafter, and guard us against the torment of the fire! (2:201)<sup>145</sup>



<sup>145</sup> *ātinā fi 'd-dunyā ḥasanatan wa fi 'l-ākbarati ḥasanatan wa qinā 'adbāba 'n-nār.*

## The Twenty-first Discourse

The people [of the Lord] have deeds to their credit like a mountain of goodness, yet they do not regard them as adding up to one good deed. Their attitude is one of humility, and they put themselves on a very lowly plane. You should take this as an example of the humble behavior you ought to be practicing. Your own attitude must be one of humility, of cautious awareness and timidity, as a precaution against disturbing and spoiling the pure serenity of the innermost being [*sirr*], and causing upset feelings in the breast. If you keep this up as a regular practice, a sense of security will come to you from Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), setting a seal upon your heart and your innermost being, and paneling the walls of your private retreat [*khalwa*]. For these, as well as for the limbs and organs of your physical body, there will come to be signs and indications, spoken tidings, and expressions of glorification [*tasbīḥ*] and remembrance [*dhikr*]. Your heart will hear marvelous wonders, but even if a word of this were to come out through your mouth, not a word of it would be heard by your own outer self or any of your fellow creatures. This will be something that is not at all difficult for you. Indeed, you will become accustomed to this as a blessing that is often talked about within your own self.

And as for the blessing of your Lord, tell of it! (93:11)<sup>146</sup>

O saint [*walī*], you must talk about these inner blessings [*ni‘am bātina*]<sup>146</sup>—you and your own self—whatever you may be involved in. You must talk about the blessing of your Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He) and the gracious favor He has bestowed upon you, but you must do so in private, because concealment [*kitmān*] is one of the preconditions for being a saint [*walī*], whereas open disclosure [*izhār*] is one of the preconditions for being a Prophet [*nabī*]. In the case of the saint, his open disclosure can only be toward Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), for if he makes his business public, he will be taken to task and deprived

<sup>146</sup> *wa ammā bi-ni‘mati Rabbika fa-ḥaddith.*

of his spiritual state [*ḥāl*]. It may be, however, that his business comes to be publicly known purely through the action of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), in which case he will not be subject to chastisement and reproach, since he cannot be held responsible.

Somebody once said to me: “I notice that, when anyone else receives a spiritual experience, he will always keep it a secret, whereas you will disclose it openly.” I responded to this by saying: “Woe unto you! We have never made anything public. This disclosure happens involuntarily, because of a superior force [*ghalabatan*], not by deliberate intent. Whenever my reservoir [*ḥawḍ*] becomes full to the brim, its contents must be reduced, so, when the opportunity arises, they spill out all around it, without my having any choice in the matter. What am I to do about it?”

Woe unto you! You are devoting all your attention to the contributions and the state of your finances, to the group premises [*zāwiya*] and the people. Your heart is too full. You must take to the deserts and the empty spaces. Then, when He has brought you the treasure of nearness [to Him], that is when it will be appropriate for you to settle down among the people, for then it will be their turn.

May Allāh bestow His mercy upon anyone who believes what I have to say, upon anyone who tastes what I have to say, upon anyone who puts it into practice in his private and his public life.

O my people! You must go on struggling and making strenuous efforts, and never give up in despair, for relief may come at any moment. Surely you must have heard Him say (Exalted is He):

It may be that Allāh will bring some new thing to pass thereafter.  
(65:1)<sup>147</sup>

You should be afraid of your Lord, and you should also pin your hopes on Him. Surely you must have heard Him say (Exalted is He):

Allāh warns you to beware of Himself. (3:28)<sup>148</sup>

To the extent of your fearfulness and your wariness, you will experience safekeeping [*amān*]. Put all your trust in your Lord, and devote yourselves to Him. Surely you must have heard Him say (Exalted is He):

And whenever someone puts all his trust in Allāh, He will suffice him.  
(65:3)<sup>149</sup>

<sup>147</sup> *la'alla 'llāba yuḥdithu ba'da dbālīka amrā.*

<sup>148</sup> *wa yuḥadbdhirukumu 'llābu Nafsab.*

<sup>149</sup> *wa man yatawakkal 'ala 'llābi fa-Huwa ḥasbub.*

O Allāh, enable us to do without Your creatures. Enable us to do without those who have accumulated material possessions, then piled them beneath their feet and swaggered over them. They are immersed in their arrogant pride. The poor come begging and pleading for their help, but they pretend to be deaf. O Allāh, include us among those who lay down all their needs before You alone, among those who appeal to You alone for help with things that are important to them. Āmīn.





## The Twenty-second Discourse

**S**ufyān [ath-Thawrī]<sup>150</sup> (may Allāh bestow His mercy upon him) was once asked: “Who is properly described as an ignoramus [*jāhil*]?” So he said in reply: “The ignoramus is someone who is so unaware of his Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He) that he does not apply to Him for his basic needs. A person who does not apply to Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) for his basic needs can be compared to a man who works in a king’s palace, performing a task which the king has ordered him to carry out, but who leaves his work and goes out to the door of a man living in the same neighborhood as the king, to ask him for a slice of bread to eat. One can easily imagine how the king will despise him and strip him down, when this is brought to his attention!”

How will it be for you to die, when you have not yet recognized your Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He)?

O Allāh, bless us with the experience of being aware of You [*urzuqnā mā rifatak*], of working sincerely [*ikhhlās al-ʿamal*] for Your sake and of ceasing to work for the sake of anyone other than You. Bless us with Your knowledge, both the knowledge of the outer [*ʿilm az-ẓāhir*] and the knowledge of the inner [*ʿilm al-bāṭin*]. We have practiced patience and

<sup>150</sup> Abū ‘Abdullāh Sufyān ibn Sa‘īd ath-Thawrī was born in Kūfa in A.H. 97/715 C.E. He founded a school of Islāmic jurisprudence [*fiqh*] which survived for about two centuries after his death in Baṣra in A.H. 161/778 C.E. Shaikh ‘Abd al-Qādir (may Allāh be well pleased with him) clearly held him in very high regard, as witness the following passage from the Twenty-fourth Discourse of *The Sublime Revelation [al-Faṭḥ ar-Rabbānī]*:

A certain wise man (may the mercy of Allāh be upon him) is reported as having said: “I saw Sufyān ath-Thawrī (may the mercy of Allāh be upon him) in a dream, after his death, so I said to him: ‘What has Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) done with you?’ He said: ‘He has put one of my feet on the Bridge [*ṣirāṭ*] and the other in Paradise.’” May Allāh’s peace be upon him, for he was a pious and ascetic jurist [*faqīh*], who acquired knowledge and put it into practice. He gave knowledge its due by practicing it, and he gave practice its due by doing it with sincerity. The Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He) gave him His approval for aspiring to Him, and the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) gave him his approval for following him. May the mercy of Allāh be upon him and upon all of the righteous, and upon us along with them.

contentment, so sweeten for us the bitterness of Your tribulation, Your knowledge of which has long preceded our own. Cause the flesh of our hearts to die, so that we may not feel the painful snipping of the scissors of Your power, and so that we may enjoy Your companionship for ever. Āmīn.



## The Twenty-third Discourse <sup>151</sup>

**O** young man! If something belongs to you, it will not pass you by, nor will it be used up by anyone else. But if something belongs to someone other than you, it will never come to you, however much you may want it and desire to possess it. There is only yesterday, which is past and gone, today, where you are right now, and tomorrow, which is yet to come. Your yesterday has become a lesson for you to apply today. As for tomorrow, it is unclear whether you will be there or not, since you have no way of knowing what tomorrow holds in store.

You are going to remember what I am saying to you now. You will remember and you will be sorry. Woe unto you! You are trading your presence with me for the profit of a grain or a few grains. What has cut you off from me is simply your ignorance of what I am involved in and what I have to say. You have completely failed to understand it, root and branch. I have talked, I have given advice, and I have not yet given up trying. You will remember after a while the good counsel I am offering you now. You will experience after death the ultimate significance of my words, and then you will recall what I am telling you.

I commit my affair to Allāh. (40:44)<sup>152</sup>

I also invoke the words [of the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace)]:

There is no power and no strength except through Allāh, the High, the Almighty [*lā ḥawla wa-lā quwwata illā bi'llāhi l-'Alīyyi l-'Aẓīm*].

There is nothing dearer to the believer [*mu'min*] than worshipful service [*'ibāda*]. The thing that is most dear to him is getting up to perform the prayer [*ṣalāt*]. While he is sitting at home, his heart will be waiting for the

<sup>151</sup> The passages printed in ordinary (non-bold) Jilani font are also to be found—with only minor differences almost entirely explicable as due to mistakes by the copyist of *Jalā' al-Khawāṭir*—in the Sixty-second Discourse of Shaikh 'Abd al-Qādir's work *The Sublime Revelation [al-Faṭḥ ar-Rabbānī]*. (See pp. 472–73 of the translation published by Al-Baz.)

<sup>152</sup> *wa uḥawwīḍu amrī ila 'llāh*.

muezzin [*mu'adhdhin*], who is the caller [*dā'ī*] of the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He). When he hears the call to prayer [*adbān*], a feeling of happiness enters his heart and he flies off to the large congregational mosques [*jawāmi'*] or to the smaller places of worship [*masājid*]. He rejoices when a beggar comes his way; if he has anything on him he gives it to him, because he has heard the words of the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace):

The beggar is the gift [*badiyya*] of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) to His servant.

How could he fail to rejoice, having carried out the commandment of his Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He) when He was asking him for a loan by way of the poor man's hand?

The Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) is reported as having said:

On the Day of Resurrection, Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) will say to His believing servants: "You have preferred your life hereafter to your worldly life, and you have preferred My worship to your carnal desires. By My Glory [*'izzatī*] and My Majesty [*jalālī*], I did not create My Garden of Paradise for anything but your benefit!"

This is what He will say to these [believing servants]. As for those who are his lovers [*muḥibbūn*], this is what He will say to them: "You have preferred Me to all My creatures, to My lower world and to My other world. You have dismissed all creatures from your hearts and banished them from your innermost beings [*asrār*], so this My countenance is for you, My nearness is for you, and you are My servants in very truth."

Among the saints [*awliyā'*] there are some who partake in their own day of the food and drink of the Garden of Paradise and who see everything that it contains. Then there are those who pass beyond eating and drinking, become detached from creatures and invisible to them, and continue to inhabit the earth without dying, like Ilyās and Khidr. Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) has a considerable number of such invisible ones on the earth, able to see people while people cannot see them. The saints [*awliyā'*] among them constitute a majority, while the eminent figures [*a'yān*] among them are a small minority, just a few isolated individuals, whose favor everyone comes seeking. It is through their agency that the earth becomes fruitful, that rain falls from the sky, and that creatures are shielded from disaster.

The food and drink of the angels [*malā'ika*] is the remembrance [*dhikr*] of the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He), the proclamation of His Glory [*tasbiḥ*] and the declaration of His Uniqueness [*tablīl*] [the utterance of the words *lā ilāha illa 'llāh*, meaning "There is none worthy of worship except the One Almighty God."] For a few individuals among the saints [*awliyā'*] this comes to be their food also.

**How vast is the extent of your stupidity, O you who are blessed with perfect health and time for leisure! The Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) is reported as having said:**

Two blessings that many people fail to appreciate are good health [*ṣiḥḥa*] and leisure [*farāgh*].

You must make full use of your good health and your leisure in order to obey Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), before sickness comes to spoil your health and distracting preoccupations leave you with no more time for leisure. You must take full advantage of your affluence before you find yourself in poverty, because affluence will not last forever. Be generous in your treatment of the poor, and let them share the things in your possession, for then you will establish credit with Allāh. If you do this, your Lord will treat you generously and grant you His favor both in this world and in the hereafter.

Woe unto you! You must take full advantage of your life before your death arrives. You must heed the lessons taught by death, as if it were a preacher, for the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) used to say:

Death is sufficient as a preacher.<sup>153</sup>

Death wears out all that is new. It brings all that is distant near. It gives the lie to everyone who claims to be telling the truth. There is no escape from death. It may arrive this very day, or even in this very hour. The matter is in the hand of Someone other than you; it is not in your hands. Everything you seem to possess is merely on loan to you. Whether it be your youth, your good health, your leisure, your affluence, your poverty, or your life itself, it is with you as a loan [*'āriya*], so you had better take good care of it.

Woe unto you! How can you tell other people to be patient, when you are in such a state of frantic agitation? How can you tell them to accept

<sup>153</sup> *kafā bi'l-mawti wā'izan.*

the divine decree [*qadā'*], when you are so dissatisfied? How can you tell them to practice detachment from this world, when you have such a keen appetite for it? How can you tell them to long for the hereafter, when you are quite indifferent to it? How can you tell them to put all their trust in Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), when you put your trust in anyone but Him? You are an abomination to the hearts of the champions of truth [*ṣiddīqīn*] and the righteous [*ṣāliḥīn*] among His servants. Surely you must have heard one of them say: "Do not tell someone that what he is doing is wrong, and then go and do the same thing yourself." To behave like that is very shameful indeed. You are wholly devoted to creatures, and you consist entirely of hypocrisy, so it is quite certain that you have less than the weight of a mosquito's wing to show for yourself in the presence of Allāh. Your place is with the hypocrites at the lowest level of the Fire of Hell.

To stay and bear with what I have to say is an indication of true faith [*īmān*], while running away from it is a sure sign of hypocrisy [*nifāq*].

O Allāh, relent toward us! Do not put us to shame in this world and the hereafter, and:

Give us in this world good, and good in the hereafter, and guard us against the torment of the fire! (2:201)<sup>154</sup>



<sup>154</sup> *ātina fi 'd-dunyā ḥasanatan wa fi 'l-ākhirati ḥasanatan wa qinā 'adbāba 'n-nār.*

## The Twenty-fourth Discourse

**O** my people! You must refrain from idle gossip, and from accumulating worldly goods and quarreling over them. You are going to suffer punishment [on the Day of Reckoning] because of the worldly wealth you have in your possession, unless you apply some of it to discharging your obligations toward the poor and the needy, and spend the rest of it in obedience to Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) and in His worshipful service [*‘ibāda*].

Woe unto you! These goods have been entrusted to you as the authorized agents [*wukalā’*] of your Lord. Have you no sense of shame? There are poor folk among your own neighbors. They are dying of hunger, while you turn away and ignore their plight. Surely you must have heard your Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He) and how He has said:

[Believe in Allāh and His Messenger] and spend from that of which He has made you trustees. (57:7)<sup>155</sup>

Thus He has informed you that you have been placed in charge of that wealth as trustees. But you have all treated it as your personal property. You have come out against Him as rebels [*khawārij*]. He has not instructed you to expropriate it all. By no means! He has assigned a fixed sum to the poor, as a definite entitlement, namely, the alms-due [*zakāt*], expiatory payments [*kaffārāt*] and votary donations [*nudhūr*]. You must settle the lawful claims of the poor, then you must settle the lawful claims of your family and close relatives. Charitable giving, over and above the payment of the alms-due, is part of the ethics of the true believer [*akhlāq al-mu’min*]. If someone does business with Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), that person is sure to make a profit. As He has said (and none speaks more truly than He) in the unambiguous wording [*muḥkam*] of His Book:

And whatever thing you shall expend, He will replace it. (34:39)<sup>156</sup>

<sup>155</sup> [*āminū bi’llāhi wa rasūlibi*] wa anfiqū mim mā ja’alakum mustakblafina fih.

<sup>156</sup> wa mā afaqtum min sbai’in fa-Huwa yukblifub.

Go out with your heart, stripped naked of all that you possess. Practice detachment from the whole of you, so that you may be given the equivalent of everything you own.

Woe unto you! Your fellow creatures can neither bring you any benefit nor cause you any harm, unless an authorization [*tawqīʿ*] from Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) has first been deposited in your hearts. Your hearts are moved by the One who holds them in His hand. He moves them as He will, sometimes in the direction of subordination [*taskhīr*] and sometimes in the direction of empowerment [*taslīṭ*]. Surely you must have heard how Allāh (Exalted is He) has said:

Whatever mercy Allāh opens for mankind, none can withhold it; and whatever He withholds, none can release it thereafter. (35:2)<sup>157</sup>

When trials and tribulations come your way, you must be ready to greet them with faith [*īmān*], patience [*ṣabr*], submission [*taslīm*], and the joyful affirmation: “*Lā ilāha illa ʾllāh* [There is none worthy of worship except Allāh].” You must endure them with patience and in His company, for then their days will soon be gone and their moments will pass into oblivion.

O seeker! Do not run away from the door of the One you seek, on account of the arrows of His trial and tribulation. Hold your ground, for then you will come in contact with the One you seek. When the seeker [*murīd*] is put to the test and made to suffer, he needs a qualified doctor [*ustādh*] to treat him during his ordeal, someone who will instruct him to bear it with patience and be thankful for it, who will tell him what medicine to take, who will tell him to turn away from his lower self [*nafs*] and stop giving in to its demands. If the seeker sincerely accepts the advice of his shaikh, Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) will put an end to his ordeal sooner or later.

O You who keep the salt water separate from the sweet! Place a partition [*barzakh*] of Your mercy between us and our sins! Āmīn.

<sup>157</sup> mā yaftaḥi ʾllābu liʾn-nāsi min raḥmatin fa-lā mumsika labā : wa mā yumsik fa-lā mursila labu min baʿdib.



## The Twenty-fifth Discourse <sup>158</sup>

**I** see you as the Devil, or at least as his deputy [*khalīfa*], for you have entrusted yourself to his care, and you have accepted his word as true. Meanwhile, he is consuming the flesh of your religion [*dīn*] and your devotion to righteousness [*taqwā*], and he is squandering your capital [*ra's māl*], while you have nothing of any value to show for it all. Woe unto you! You must fend him off and drive him away from your presence by practicing constant remembrance [of Allāh]. Make a constant practice of divine remembrance [*dhikr*], for this will destroy him and cause him to flee, while requiring a minimum of effort on your part. Remember the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He)—many times with your heart for every time you do so with your tongue—instead of remembering your food and your drink.

Practice cautious restraint [*wara'*] under all the circumstances in which you may find yourself. Appeal for assistance in putting the Devil to flight, by saying:

“There is no power, nor is there any strength, except through Allāh, the All-High, the Almighty. Whatever Allāh wills, so shall it be. There is none worthy of worship but Allāh, the King, the Plain Truth. Glory be to Allāh, and with His praise. Glory be to Allāh the Almighty, and with His praise.” [*lā hawla wa lā quwwata illā bi'llāhi 'l-'Alīyyi 'l-'Aẓīm—mā shā'a 'llāhu kān—lā ilāha illa 'llāhu 'l-Maliku 'l-Ḥaqqu 'l-Mubīn—subḥāna 'llāhi wa bi-ḥamdih—subḥāna 'llāhi 'l-'Aẓīm wa bi-ḥamdih*].

By this the Devil will be overthrown. His power will be broken, and his armies will be put to flight.

The throne of Iblīs is on the ocean, and he sends his soldiers to fight on the land. The mightiest of them in his eyes is the reverence [*ḥurma*] he can inspire. Those that cause the worst mischief are the sins of disobedience [*ma' āṣī*] committed by human beings.

<sup>158</sup> The paragraph printed in ordinary (non-bold) Jilani font is also to be found—with minor differences presumably due to the inaccurate transcription of the text of *Jalāl al-Khawāṭir*—in the Sixty-second Discourse of Shaikh 'Abd al-Qādir's work *The Sublime Revelation [al-Faṭḥ ar-Rabbānī]*. (See p. 477 of the translation published by Al-Baz.)

In the case of one who has real experience [*‘arīf*], polite behavior [*adab*] is as much an obligatory duty [*farīḍa*] as is repentance in the case of the servant in trouble. How can he fail to be highly refined, when he is the nearest of all creatures to the Creator? If someone behaved with ignorant discourtesy in the society of kings, his rudeness might well result in his being put to death. Anyone who lacks good manners is despised by Creator and creatures alike. Any occasion on which good manners are lacking is an abomination. It is absolutely essential to be well behaved in the company of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He). You must cultivate good behavior.

**If you really knew me well, you would never be out of my presence. You would follow me in whichever direction I might take. You would be quite incapable of leaving, regardless of whether I put you to work in my service or failed to offer you any employment, whether I took things from you or gave things to you, whether I made you poor or made you rich, whether I tired you out or set you at your ease.**

The basic requirement in all of this is that you should have a good attitude [*ḥusn az-ẓann*] and correct behavior [*ṣalāḥ*] toward Him. Both of these are entirely lacking in your case, so how can you be worthy of my companionship? How can you derive any benefit from what I have to say? You must cultivate the good manners of companionship [*ṣuḥba*] and fellowship [*mu‘ āshara*] with the Creator [*Khālīq*] (Almighty and Glorious is He) as well as with His creatures [*khalq*].

**O Allāh, do not let their response to hearing these words of mine be used as evidence for the case against them. Let it rather be evidence in their favor!**

**Our Lord, give us in this world good, and good in the hereafter, and guard us against the torment of the fire! (2:201)<sup>159</sup>**



<sup>159</sup> *Rabbanā ātinā fi ‘d-dunyā ḥasanatan wa fi ‘l-ākhirati ḥasanatan wa qinā ‘adbāba ‘n-nār.*

## The Twenty-sixth Discourse <sup>160</sup>

**W**hen the believer has mastered his lower self, so that it serves as a riding mount beneath him,<sup>161</sup> the deeds of his heart will show forth upon his face. His face will come to resemble the full moon, and he will come to be as if he were a king. His heart will rejoice in the generous favor shown to it by Allāh (Exalted is He). His good deeds will give him the glad tidings of that which Allāh has made ready for him in the Garden of Paradise. His righteous conduct [*‘amal ṣālīḥ*] will assume a visible form, and it will say to him: “I am your weeping, your patient endurance, your dutiful devotion [*taqwā*], your faith [*īmān*], your conviction [*yaqīn*], your performance of the ritual prayer [*ṣalāt*], your keeping of the fast [*ṣawm*], your dedicated strivings [*mujāḥadāt*], your eager longing [*shawq*] for your Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He), your awareness [*maʿrifā*] of Him, your knowledge [*ilm*] of Him, and your excellent conduct and behavior in His presence (Almighty and Glorious is He).” The weight of his burden will then be lifted from him, his fearfulness will be transformed into a sense of security, and his pain and suffering will turn into comfort and ease.

<sup>160</sup> The passages printed in ordinary (non-bold) Jilani font are also to be found—with only minor differences almost entirely explicable as due to mistakes by the copyist of *Jalāʾ al-Khawātir*—in the Sixty-second discourse of Shaikh ʿAbd al-Qādir’s work *The Sublime Revelation [al-Fatḥ ar-Rabbānī]*. (See pp. 481–82 of the translation published by Al-Baz.)

<sup>161</sup> As transcribed by the copyist of the Pakistani edition (the only version currently available), this Discourse actually begins in mid-sentence, with the Arabic words *wa markūban bibi* [and as a riding mount beneath him]. The words tentatively supplied by the translator have been chosen on the strength of the following passage from the Fortieth Discourse of *The Sublime Revelation [al-Fatḥ ar-Rabbānī]*. (See pp. 258–59 of the translation published by Al-Baz):

Mind the business of your own lower self [*nafs*], until you can control it, subdue it, hold it captive and make it serve as your riding animal. Then you will be able to ride it across the deserts of this world in order to reach the hereafter. It will carry you past creatures until you reach the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He). Then, when you have accomplished this and have gained strength, you will be able to give rides to others. Out of this world you will take them, to their Master [*Mawlā*] you will convey them, and with morsels of wisdom you will feed them.

In the case of one who has not done righteous work, however, but who has sinned against his Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He) and has been guilty of serious offences, he must carry on his back the full weight and burden of his sinful acts of disobedience. Hunger and thirst will be all that he has inside him, while fear will be his outer garment. The angels will herd him along from behind, as he drags himself painfully over the ground until he reaches the fields of the Resurrection [*‘araṣāt al-Qiyāma*]. Once there, he will have to face the Interrogation and the Reckoning. He will be subjected to a very strict settling of accounts, and then he will be cast into the Fire of Hell, in order to receive his punishment therein. If [in spite of all his faults] he is one of those who affirm the Divine Unity [*abl at-tawḥīd*], he will be chastised to the extent of his misdeeds, but then Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) will deliver him through His mercy from the Fire of Hell. But if he is one of those who are guilty of unbelief [*abl al-kufr*], in that case he is doomed to abide in the Fire for all eternity, along with the rest of his kind.

If you make a constant practice of repentance and genuine reflection, you will give up all interest in matters pertaining to this world, and concentrate your attention on those that are relevant to the hereafter. You will give up all interest in matters pertaining to creatures [*khalq*], and focus instead on those that concern the Truth [*Ḥaqq*]. You will refrain from all that is evil, and practice only what is good.

O you who fail to practice reflection and repentance, you are a loser, and you have nothing good to your credit. You are a loser, not one who makes a profit. You invite comparison with a man who buys and sells, but who keeps no account of his expenditure. He does not appreciate the value of his money, so it soon amounts to very little. He sees his capital disappear, and he squanders and fritters away whatever he still has left. Woe unto you! You have wasted your capital, meaning your lifetime and the opportunities at your disposal. All that you ever acquired has flown away in chaotic confusion [*ḥarj*]. How different is the case of that other person, one of the true believers [*mu’ minīn*], for whom every acquisition has been a gem [*jawhar*]. The time is now very close at hand when the believers will discharge their obligations, while you will be seized and held in confinement. Not so much as a single atom of what you have to offer will be considered worthy of acceptance. The Lord of Truth

(Almighty and Glorious is He) will accept nothing less than sincere devotion [*ikhhlās*], and sincere devotion is something you do not possess. Surely you must have heard the saying of the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace):

Call yourselves to account, before you are called to account [at the Reckoning]. Weigh yourselves, before you are weighed [in the Balance]. And spruce yourselves up in preparation for the Greatest Review [*al-ʿard al-akbar*].

It has been said that, when Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) wishes for a person to be someone who is truly aware [*ʿārif*] of Him, one of His saints [*walī min awliyāʾ ih*], one of His loving friends [*muḥibb min aḥbābih*], one of those who are sought after by Him [*murād min murādih*], He appoints an angel to watch over him at all times, in both his private and his public life. This angel will educate his heart and train his physical constitution, inspire him [*yulhimuhu*] to do what is good, and steer him away from all that is evil. Applicable to him now are the words of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) concerning Joseph (upon him and upon our own Prophet be blessing and peace):

So it was, that We might ward off from him evil and lewdness; he was one of Our devoted servants. (12:24)<sup>162</sup>

This is His way of dealing with the Prophets [*anbiyāʾ*] and Messengers [*mursalīn*], the saints [*awliyāʾ*] and the champions of truth [*ṣiddīqīn*] (may the blessing and peace of Allāh be upon them all).

Jesus (blessing and peace be upon him) once came across some boys who were at play. They invited him to join them in their game, so he said: “Glory be to Allāh! It is not for playing games that He has created us.”

The lower selves [*nufūs*] of the people [of the Lord] are prompting to good, not to evil [*ammāra biʾl-khair lā biʾs-sūʾ*]. They have become attached to their hearts after the experience of witnessing the essential truth. They have come to be tame and well-behaved toward the Companion Most High [*ar-Raḥīm al-ʿAlī*].

It is coming to the point where the Qurʾān is heard as a lifeless recitation. It could well be said that what is being heard is merely an external form [*ṣūra*] with no meaningful content [*maʿnā*]. You must not spend so much time listening to crazy foolishness, and spouting such

<sup>162</sup> *ka-dbālīka li-naṣṣīfa ʿanbu ʾs-sūʾa wa ʾl-faḥṣhā: innabu min ʾibādīna ʾl-mukhlāṣīn.*

drivel yourselves. The Qur'ān should be a source of life for your hearts, and of pure serenity for your innermost beings [*asrār*], and it should lay the foundation for proximity to the All-Merciful [*ar-Raḥmān*] (Almighty and Glorious is He) in the Garden of Paradise.

The believer [*mu'min*] is well aware of his fellow creatures. He has ways of reading their signs. His heart is very perceptive [*ḥassās*]. He can see by the light of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), which He has lodged within his heart. **The light of hearts is purity [*ṭahāra*]**—the purity of hearts and innermost beings [*asrār*] and private conscience [*khalwa*]. If your heart is not clean, if your private conscience is not clean, what benefit can you derive from the cleanliness of your outer body? Even if you bathed yourself a thousand times each day, not the slightest trace of dirt would be washed away from your heart. Sinful acts of disobedience have a bad smell, which makes it easy for them to be detected by those who see by the light of Allāh, but they have an attitude of tolerance toward their fellow creatures and do not put them to shame.

Woe unto you! You are too lazy, so it is certain that nothing will fall into your hand. Your neighbors, your brothers and your close relatives all went off on their travels. They went exploring and digging and they discovered buried treasures. They made a profit of ten or twenty on the dirham and returned successful, while you were just sitting at home. This trifling amount you have in hand will soon be gone, and after that you will be begging from other people.

Woe unto you! You must make serious efforts on the way of the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He) and not just rely on His destiny [*qadar*]. You have surely heard Him say:

As for those who strive in Our cause, We shall guide them to Our paths. (29:69)<sup>163</sup>

**You must make serious efforts, for then the guidance will come to you. Nothing will come about because of you, and yet you must play your part. It will not come about through you alone.** You must make a start, then others will come along to complete the work you have begun. Everything is in the hand of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), so do not go seeking anything from anyone but Him. Surely you must have heard Him say:

And naught there is, but with Us are the stores thereof, and We send it down only in a known measure. (15:21)<sup>164</sup>

<sup>163</sup> *wa 'lladhīna jābadū finā la-nabdiyyannahum subulanā.*

<sup>164</sup> *wa in min shai'in illā 'indanā kbazā'inub : wa mā nunazzilubu illā bi-qadarin mā'lūm.*

This verse [*āya*] of the Qurʾān leaves one with nothing more to say. O you who go chasing after the dīnār and the dirham, each of them is a thing, and they are both in the hand of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), so do not expect to get them from creatures. Do not try to get them with the tongue of your idolatrous worship [*shirk*] of creatures and your reliance on material means [*asbāb*].

O Allāh! O Creator of all creatures [*yā Khāliq al-khalq*]! O Originator of all material means [*yā Musabbib al-asbāb*]! Deliver us from the snare of associating [*shirk*] Your creatures and Your material means with You, and:

Give us in this world good, and good in the hereafter, and guard us against the torment of the fire! (2:201)<sup>165</sup>



<sup>165</sup> *ātina fi 'd-dunyā ḥasanatan wa fi 'l-ākbarati ḥasanatan wa qina 'adbāba 'n-nār.*

## The Twenty-seventh Discourse <sup>166</sup>

**O** servants of Allāh, you are in the abode of [Divine] Wisdom [*dār al-ḥikma*], so you cannot get by without mediating assistance [*wāsiṭa*]. You must ask your Master [*Ma'būd*] to supply you with a physician who can offer medical treatment for the diseases of your hearts, a therapist who can give you therapy, a guide who can give you guidance and take you by the hand. You must stick close to those who are close to Him and who have learned how to behave in His presence, to the guardians [*ḥujjāb*] of His nearness and the keepers of His door.

You have been content to serve your own lower selves [*nufūs*] and to follow your own whims [*ahwā'*] and natural tendencies [*ṭibā'*]. **You make strenuous efforts to keep your lower selves happy, and to let them enjoy all the comfort and luxury of this world, although this is something you will never be able to achieve.** Hour after hour, day after day, month after month, and year after year the time goes by, and death will come to you sooner or later, for you are powerless to escape it. Death has you under its constant surveillance, but you do not have a clue. You are too absentminded to notice, yet it is standing there staring you straight in the face. The moment is now very near at hand, when one of you will be left abandoned in a field, namely, the field of the consequences you have earned and the life you have led. The spirit [*rūḥ*] of someone amongst you will leave on a journey, while his body stays behind as a corpse. Who will take pity on you and bury you in the ground, before the wild beasts and the vermin of the earth have time to consume you? Then your family and your friends, not to mention your enemies, will settle down to enjoy their food and drink and all their other comforts, so it is anyone's guess

<sup>166</sup> The passages printed in ordinary (non-bold) Jilani font are also to be found—with only minor differences almost entirely explicable as due to mistakes by the copyist of *Jalāl al-Khawāṭir*—in the Sixty-second discourse of Shaikh 'Abd al-Qādir's work *The Sublime Revelation [al-Faṭḥ ar-Rabbānī]*. (See p. 482 of the translation published by Al-Baz.)



as to whether they will ask Allāh to bestow His mercy upon you, or whether they will neglect to offer such a prayer on your behalf.

Many kings have been killed by their enemies, who have then proceeded to dump their bodies out in the desert wastes. By deliberately leaving them there without burial, they made sure that they would be devoured by dogs and consumed by verminous pests. How rotten a king must be, to have his reign brought to such an inglorious end! How splendid is the saying of certain righteous man: “A king who can be removed by death is not really a king at all. The only real king is the King who never dies.”

The only intelligent one among you is the person who remembers death, and who is content to accept whatever destiny [*qadar*] may bring his way. He shows his gratitude when he receives things that he likes, and he is patient in the face of anything he finds unpleasant. You must focus your contemplation on matters connected with your religious obligations [*adyān*]. Instead of dwelling on the desires and pleasures of the flesh, you should be contemplating death and that which lies beyond it. As for the quotas of worldly goods allotted to His creatures, Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) has already finished fixing them, so they can neither be increased by a single atom, nor be diminished by a single atom. The Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) has told us:

Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) has finished the work of creation [*khalq*], providence [*rizq*], and timing [*ajal*]. The pen has run dry from prerecording everything that is to be until the Day of Resurrection.<sup>167</sup>

Do not devote your energy to the pursuit of something that has already been allotted by destiny. Such effort is merely idle sport and foolishness. Whatever your situations and circumstances may be, they have all been planned by Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), and He has set the exact date and time for everything to happen. As long as the lower self [*nafs*] has not been tamed through dedicated struggle, it will not believe in this, and it will refuse to give up its greedy ambition and stubborn recalcitrance. Before the lower self has been brought to a state of calm composure [*tuma' nīna*], any claim to believe in this can be no more than a verbal formula. Be sensible! Try to apply what I am telling you. Do not devote your energy to the pursuit of that which is predestined [*maqḍūr*], that which is already shaped and formed [*mukawwan*], that

<sup>167</sup> *jaffa 'l-qalamu bi-mā huwa kā'inun ilā yawmi 'l-qiya'ma.*

which is inevitable, that which is bound to be at your disposal, that which must surely come to you at the precise moment assigned to it in the foreknowledge [*ilm*] of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He).

The Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) is reported as having said:

Even if the servant says: “O Allāh, do not provide for me,” He will provide for him in spite of himself.

It has been ordained that he shall receive his sustenance from Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), and it must inevitably come to him from Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He). Mere creatures have nothing whatsoever to do with this.

Where do you stand when it comes to the affirmation of Divine Unity [*tawhīd*], O you who attribute partners to Allāh [*mushrik*]? Where do you stand in relation to pure serenity [*ṣafā*], O you who are so troubled and confused? Where do you stand in relation to contentment [*riḍā*], O you who are so full of bitterness and resentment? Where do you stand when it comes to patience, O you who are so fond of complaining to your fellow creatures? This course that you are on is certainly not the religion [*dīn*] of our righteous predecessors [*man taqaddama minā ṣ-ṣāliḥīn*]!

I am so appalled when I hear somebody saying “Allāh, Allāh,” although he is actually contemplating someone or something other than Him.

O you who make it your practice to remember, you must remember Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) while you are in His presence. Do not remember Him with your tongue, while your heart is in the presence of someone other than Him. You must flee from your fellow creatures and run toward His door. You must expel this world, the hereafter, and everything else besides Him, from your heart, your innermost being [*sirr*] and your spiritual content [*maʿnā*]. Only then will you be fit to remember Him with the tongue of your outer self [*zāhir*].

Woe unto you! You say “Allāh is Greater [than anything whatsoever] [*Allāhu Akbar*],” but you do not mean what you say. Bread is greater, as far as you are concerned. The seasoning [*idām*] you add to your bread is greater, as far as you are concerned. A chunk of meat is greater, as far as you are concerned. The wealth you spend your life accumulating is greater, as far as you are concerned. The watchman on your street is greater, as far as you are concerned, and the same is true of the confidence trickster [*duwālī*]<sup>168</sup> who operates in your neighborhood. The ruler

<sup>168</sup> See n.<sup>193</sup> on p. 164 below.

[*sulṭān*] of your town and district is greater, as far as you are concerned. These are the people you fear, and these are the people on whom you pin all your hopes. You fawn on them and flatter them in order to win their favor, while keeping your ulterior motives hidden from them, but you affront your Lord with every kind of dirty trick. You rely on these people to solve all your serious problems, and you look upon them as the source of harm and benefit, of giving and withholding. If I am obliged to make you face the unvarnished truth, I can only say that you are bankrupt in religion [*aflastum fi'd-dīn*], and that you simply do not qualify as Muslims or as believers [*mu' minīn*].

For someone who is still at a distance [from the Lord], the true facts are kept hidden behind a veil, while someone who is near [to Him] is allowed to penetrate that veil. Yet one who has been drawn close [*muqarrab*] may not divulge the things into which he is granted insight, and he may never utter a single word about them, unless he is moved to do so by an irresistible force [*ghalaba*]. So, glory be to the One who veils the faults of His servants! Glory be to the One who allows the special few [*khawāṣṣ*] among His creatures to gain such insight into the states of being of His servants, and then commands them to keep their faults from being exposed!

O my people, you must be as free as you possibly can from the cares and concerns of this world. You must not feel a strong desire for anything at all, since your meeting [with the Lord] is very near at hand. If he were able to do so, the true believer [*mu' min*], would abstain from his food, his drink, his clothes and his wife. If he were capable of doing so, he would rid himself entirely of his own lower self [*nafs*], his natural inclinations [*ṭab'*] and his passions [*hawā*], so that he would never go looking for anything other than his Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He).

You must learn to hold your tongues and keep them from talking about things that do not concern you. You must make a frequent practice of the remembrance of your Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He). Stick to your houses, and do not go out of doors except in cases of absolute necessity, in order to do some work that simply cannot be left undone, to join the congregation for the Friday prayers [*jum'a*] and other such communal religious gatherings [*jamā'āt*], or to attend the sessions of

divine remembrance [*majālis adh-dhikr*]. If it is a feasible proposition for any of you to do your regular work at home, that is the best way to go about it.

Woe unto you! You claim to love Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), yet you do not obey Him. When all is said and done, love [*maḥabba*] becomes meaningful only after fulfillment of the commandments and observance of the prohibitions [of the sacred law], satisfaction with the gifts one has received, and contentment with the decree of destiny [*qadā'*]. Then it is appropriate to love Him on account of His blessings. Then one should come to love Him without looking for anything in return. Then the lover [*muḥibb*] should feel an intense yearning for the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He), as he remembers Him with his tongue and all the other limbs and organs of his physical body, with his heart, and with his innermost being [*sirr*]. When the lover has reached the stage of total absorption [*afnā*] in the remembrance of Him, He will remember the lover, hailing him as a shining example to the rest of His creatures, and distinguishing him from them with special honor. The lover now becomes a truth within a truth [*ḥaqqan fī ḥaqq*]. The lover ceases to exist [*yafnā*], and there remains forever the First and the Last, the Outwardly Manifest and the Inwardly Concealed [*al-Awwal wa 'l-Ākhir wa 'z-Zāhir wa 'l-Bāṭin*].<sup>169</sup>

You claim to love Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), yet you complain about Him to your fellow creatures. If someone claims to love Him while he is enjoying a state of affluence, but then complains about Him when he is reduced to a state of poverty, that person is nothing better than a downright liar. When poverty comes to afflict someone whose heart is still raw and untrained [*khām*], he does not have the patience to sustain his faith [*īmān*] and conviction [*īqān*], so he is sure to join the company of unbelief [*kufr*]. No one is properly equipped to benefit from the experience of poverty, with the exception of the true believer who is capable of patience and pious restraint [*al-mu' min aṣ-ṣābir al-wārī'*]. How could he do other than endure it with patience, when this world is his prison? Have you ever seen a prisoner trying to find a life of ease and comfort in prison? The true believer longs to make his exit from this world. He longs to be transported out of it. Between him

<sup>169</sup> These are four of the ninety-nine Most Beautiful Names [*al-Asmā' al-Ḥusnā*] of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He).

and his own lower self [*nafs*] there exists a state of hostility. He is keen to have his lower self exposed to hunger and thirst, to shame and humiliation, so that it will eventually be willing to support him in worshipful obedience. In his case, therefore, poverty can actually be a useful experience for him, since he is capable of taking full advantage of it by enduring it with patience. As the saying goes: “Keep your conscience clear, and your case will be judged worthy of commendation.”<sup>170</sup>

Woe unto you! You claim that you wish to follow me, but then you take off in other directions. You claim that you wish to follow me, but whichever way you actually proceed, you see nothing but blank walls. You see deeds but no sincerity [*‘a’ māl bi-lā ikhlās*], a commencement but no completion [*shurū’ bi-lā tamām*], an external façade but no inner content [*ẓāhir bi-lā bāṭin*], a creation but no Creator [*khalq bi-lā Khāliq*], a world here below but no world hereafter [*dunyā bi-lā ākhira*].

Much of the reasoning [*ijtihād*]<sup>171</sup> that is applied to matters of religious observance [*‘ibāda*] is done without proper knowledge [*‘ilm*]. There are many servants [of the Lord] who exercise their rational faculties by night and day, in spite of the fact that they are quite ignorant of what it takes to be thoroughly proficient in religious science [*iḥkām al-‘ilm*]. This kind of theological discussion [*kalām*] requires a thorough grasp of the principles of religious knowledge, meaning the divine ordinance and decree [*al-qadā’ wa ‘l-qadar*]. But they are discussing “reality” [*ḥaqīqa*] without any reference to the sacred law [*sharī‘a*], which means that they are guilty of atheistic heresy [*yatazandaqūn*]. This is why it has been said that any “matter of fact” [*ḥaqīqa*] that is not acknowledged by the sacred law [*sharī‘a*] is nothing but an atheistic heresy [*zandaqa*].<sup>172</sup>

<sup>170</sup> *ihfaz damīraka—yuhmad amruka*.

<sup>171</sup> As a technical term of Islāmic jurisprudence, *ijtihād* means the effort made by a qualified expert to reach an independent judgment on a point of law, through the interpretation and application of the four basic sources or principles [*uṣūl*], namely the Qur’ān, the Sunna, the consensus [*ijmā’*] of the recognized authorities, and deduction by analogy [*qiyās*].

<sup>172</sup> It is interesting to note that this same saying is quoted in the following passage from the *Utterances of Shaikh ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jilānī* [*Malḥūzāt*]. (See p. 88 of the translation published by Al-Baz):

You must be servants of the law [*ḥukm*], then servants of knowledge [*‘ilm*] while remaining in servitude to the law, in the sense that you must conform to it in humble compliance. You must enter along with knowledge into the company of the law. Any “matter of fact” [*ḥaqīqa*] that is not acknowledged by the sacred law [*sharī‘a*] is an atheistic heresy [*zandaqa*].

The fundamental starting point of theological discussion must be the statement of the law [*ḥukm*], then the next stage after that must be the thorough study and application of the law [*ihkām al-ḥukm*].<sup>173</sup>

You must make it your frequent practice to pray for forgiveness [*istighfār*] and to repent [*tawba*], since these are two mightily important basic principles for the affairs of this world and the hereafter. This is why Noah (blessings and peace be upon him) commanded his people to pray for forgiveness, and why he promised them that they would be granted forgiveness in response to their prayers, and that this world would be put at their disposal, ever ready to be of service to them. Quoting the words of Allāh (Exalted is He), Noah said to his people:

And I have said: “Seek forgiveness from your Lord; He is ever All-Forgiving, and He will let loose the sky for you in plenteous rain, and He will succor you with wealth and sons, and He will assign unto you gardens, and He will assign unto you rivers.” (71:10–12)<sup>174</sup>

You must repent your sins and turn back [to your Lord], forsaking your sinful habit of attributing partners [*shirk*] to Him, so that He may grant you all that you could ever wish for of the things of this world and the hereafter. You have sinned, as your parents Adam and Eve (blessings and peace be upon them) sinned by eating the fruit which He had forbidden them to eat. He punished them with distant exile. He stripped them of their robes of honor and left them naked, then He sent them down to the earth. All of this happened because they were guilty of sin and disobedience.

<sup>173</sup> As a kind of commentary on this passage, it may be helpful at this point to consider the words of Shaikh ‘Abd al-Qādir (may Allāh be well pleased with him) in the following excerpt from the Fourth Discourse of *The Sublime Revelation [al-Faḥḥ ar-Rabbānī]* (pp. 42–43 of the translation published by Al-Baz):

Allāh has already settled everything. His decree [*qadā’*] is eternally predetermined [*sābiq*]. Yet the law [*ḥukm*] has come, and commandment, prohibition and obligation have been superimposed, so it is not permissible for anyone to use predestination as an argument against the law. One should rather say:

He shall not be questioned as to what He does, but they shall be questioned. (21:23)

O my people! Act in accordance with this outer aspect, this black-on-white, until it brings you to act in accordance with the inner aspect of this matter. If you act on this outer [*zāhir*] it will lead you to understanding of the inner [*bāṭin*]. The first to grasp it will be your innermost being [*sirr*], then your heart [*qalb*] will convey it to your personal faculties [*nafs*]. Your personal faculties will convey it to your tongue, and your tongue will convey it to the people, to whom it will be transmitted for their welfare and benefit.

<sup>174</sup> *fa-qultu ‘staghfirū Rabbakum: innabū kāna Ghaḥfārā—yursilī ‘s-samā’a ‘alaikum midrārā—wa yumdidkum bi-amwālīn wa banīna wa yaj’al lakum jannātīn wa yaj’al lakum anbārā.*

Then sinful disobedience grew more and more intense within their physical bodies and in their hearts. But then Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) taught them how to repent and pray for forgiveness, and they did in fact repent and beg to be forgiven, so He relented toward them and forgave the pair of them.

Whether a person is antagonistic toward me or regards me with affection, it is one and the same as far as I am concerned. There is no one left on the face of the earth who is either a friend or a foe to me. This is true in the sense that I prefer the fellowship of the affirmation of Divine Unity [*tawḥīd*], and look upon creatures with an indifferent eye. As for someone who is wholly devoted to Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), that person is indeed my friend, while anyone who rebels against Him is my enemy, and the enemy of that friend of mine.

O Allāh, confirm this for me and establish my commitment to it! Make it an outright gift, not just a loan! You know that I am tightening the reins of Your religion [*dīn*], the reins of Your will [*irāda*], and that I am the servant of those who serve You, of those who abstain from everything apart from You for the sake of winning Your good pleasure.

Woe unto you, O rich man! You must not imagine that all a rich man has to do, in order to express his gratitude, is to say: “Praise be to Allāh, the Lord of All the Worlds [*al-ḥamdu li’llāhi Rabbi’l-‘ālamīn*].” To prove that he is genuinely grateful for his wealth, he must share some part of it with those who are poor and needy. In addition to paying the alms-due [*zakāt*] prescribed by the sacred law [*mafrūda*], you must share with them as much as you possibly can, and you must give without attaching any reproach. Unless you can give without reproach, there is no point in your giving at all. Surely you must have heard the words of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He):

O you who believe, do not render your freewill offerings null and void with reproach and injury. (2:264)<sup>175</sup>

When they are rendered null and void, it means that they no longer merit any spiritual reward, so the reproachful donor is a loser. He earns no spiritual reward, and his heart is tarnished, because reproachful giving amounts to attributing partners to Allāh [*shirk*]. The true believer [*mu’ min*] gives and, far from attaching any reproach, he expresses his

<sup>175</sup> *yā ayyuha’lladbinā āmanū lā tubṭilū ṣadaqātikum bi’l-manni wa’l-adbā.*



gratitude to Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) for His helpful intervention [*tawfiq*], because he is firmly convinced that He is the One who has given him whatever he has at his disposal, and that He is the One who takes it from him and gives it to someone else.

O you wealthy folk! O you who have been blessed with affluence! You must not let yourselves be dazzled by your riches. Do not boast of your wealth, and do not treat the poor with arrogant disdain because of it, for this will be the cause of your own descent into poverty. And as for you, O young folk, you must not let yourselves be dazzled by your youth and vigor. Do not let it mislead you into an attitude of arrogance toward the poor, and do not misuse it in sinful rebellion against Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He). Your physical bodies are your religions [*al-ajsād adyānukum*]. They are savage beasts that devour the flesh of your religious values, your well-being and your prosperity.

How splendid are the words of a certain righteous man, who said: “If you are in a state of grace, take care to preserve it, for acts of sinful disobedience cause the blessings of grace to disappear.”

When you come here to be with me, you must come with a positive attitude, free from doubt and suspicions. Then, when you return to your homes, you must remember this talk and not just forget all about it.

You must remember death and what lies beyond it. It is important for you to keep the fast, for it will enlighten the heart, especially when you eat lawful food [*ḥalāl*] at the time of breaking fast. Nothing will ever fall into your hands unless you are prepared to make some kind of sacrifice. The wise sages [*ḥukamāʾ*] and the learned scholars [*ʿulāmāʾ*] are unanimous in teaching that blissful comfort can only be attained by giving up blissful comfort. You ought to check it out for yourselves! One of them spent forty years without ever going to sleep, except in the posture of prostration [*sujūd*]. His prostration was his mattress, his blanket and his pillow. Here we have a good example of someone who is capable of detachment from this world, someone who yearns for the hereafter, someone who is fearfully conscious of death and the final reckoning. Here we have someone who is capable of detachment from his fellow creatures and all that they possess, someone who yearns for the Creator [*Khāliq*] and recognizes what He has in His possession, someone who is aware Him, worships Him, and struggles to combat his own lower



self for His sake. To know Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) is to love Him, and to love Him is to comply with His will.

What are you going to do with this world? If you move to the fore, you will find plenty of work to keep you busy, but if you move to the rear, you will suffer loss and disappointment. If you starve yourself of this world, you will feel light and lively, but if you stuff your belly with it, you will feel dull and heavy. I would like to know what can become of any of you through the love of sicknesses and diseases, worries and cares. There is no benefit to be had from the things of this world, except in the case of someone who uses them for charitable purposes in worshipful obedience to Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He).

The lower self [*nafs*] is ignorant, so you must teach it and give it a proper education. You must train it to recognize the difference between the illness [*dā'*] and the cure [*dawā'*], between that which is lawful [*halāl*] and that which is unlawful [*ḥarām*], between that which is beneficial and that which is corrupt. As long as it offers stiff resistance to being disciplined, you must refuse to give it a single taste of pleasure and enjoyment. You must not allow it to have anything more than its rightful due, for this is what is best for its health. Then, once it has come to accept this discipline, you should transport it to the green pastures of the earth, until its only wish is for you to decide what is best for it. Once it has been tamed in this manner, once it has come to a state of meekness and calm tranquillity, it will lose its greedy desire and receive its destined quota of worldly goods. Helpful guidance [*tawfīq*] has come to you from your Lord, for He has said (Almighty and Glorious is He):

Do not kill your own selves. Surely Allāh is ever Compassionate unto you. (4:29)<sup>176</sup>

Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) has also said:

O self at peace, return unto your Lord, well pleased, well pleasing! (89:27,28)<sup>177</sup>

Its allotted portions [*aqṣām*] will surely be placed at its disposal. The primordial foreknowledge [*al-ilm as-sābiq*] requires that they be delivered to you in full, so the tranquil self must still receive and make use of

<sup>176</sup> *lā taqtulū anfusakum—inna 'llāha kāna bikum Raḥīmā.*

<sup>177</sup> *yā ayyatuba 'n-naḥsu 'l-muṭma'inna—irji 'ī ilā Rabbiki rāḍiyatan mardīyya.* In English translations of the Qur'ān, the Arabic word *nafs* in this verse [*āya*] is usually translated as “soul”.

all the shares allotted to it, while maintaining the firmness of its restraint and the genuineness of its detachment from them. At this stage, however, their arrival will not be greeted as a frivolous distraction, but as an opportunity to bring about an expansion in the breast and a sense of well-being and pure serenity in the heart.

What all this means is that you must treat the lower self [*nafs*] like a sick patient. The physician makes his patient abstain from his usual diet, which he gradually replaces with more nourishing kinds of food and drink, until the patient attains to a state of robust good health. Thus he orders him to eat a particular meal, and then moves him along from one prescribed meal to the next, so that the very food he eats becomes a remedy for him, and a means of increasing his physical strength and fitness. Exactly the same process must be followed by that pious abstainer [*zāhid*] of whom we have been speaking. When he eventually receives his allotted portions of worldly goods, they should provide him with good health in his religion [*dīn*], and a light in his heart and his innermost being [*sirr*].

O Allāh, include us among those who abstain from all that is apart from You, and who turn to You in repentance under all circumstances, and:

Give us in this world good, and good in the hereafter, and guard us against the torment of the fire! (2:201)<sup>178</sup>



<sup>178</sup> *ātīnā fi 'd-dunyā ḥasanatan wa fi 'l-ākbarati ḥasanatan wa qinā 'adbāba 'n-nār.*

## The Twenty-eighth Discourse

**A**s Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) has told us:

The true religion in the sight of Allāh is Islām. (3:19)<sup>179</sup>

The reality [*ḥaqīqa*] of Islām is submissive obedience [*istislām*]. What is required of you is the actual practice [*taḥqīq*] of Islām, and then the actual practice of submissive obedience. You must purify your outer natures [*ẓawābir*] through Islām, and you must purify your inner natures [*bawāṭin*] through submissive obedience. You must surrender [*sallimū*] your own selves to your Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He), and be content to accept His management. You must give up your own power in exchange for the power of that which your Lord has decreed. Whatever destiny [*qadar*] may bring, you must treat it as something to be welcomed. Your Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He) knows you better than you know yourselves. Respond to His words with cheerful good pleasure. Greet His commandments and His prohibitions with readiness to comply. Offer a hearty welcome to the hardships He inflicts upon you. Prove that you have the courage of your convictions, by wearing your badge on your sleeve.<sup>180</sup>

Make the most of your life, before the advent of “a day from Allāh that cannot be turned back” (30:43),<sup>181</sup> namely, the Day of Resurrection [*Yawm al-Qiyāma*]. You must learn to curtail your expectations, for there can be no success without the curtailment of expectation [*qaṣr al-amal*]. Spend less time hankering after things of this world, for your

<sup>179</sup> *inna 'd-dīna 'inda 'llābi 'l-islām.*

<sup>180</sup> Literally: “Let your undergarment [*shī'ār*] be your outer garment [*dithār*].” The term *shī'ār* is applied to the garment that is worn next to the body, while the *dithār* is defined as “a garment which one wears for warmth, above the *shī'ār*.” According to a traditional report, the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) once said to the *Anṣār* [Helpers]: “You are the *shī'ār*, while the people in general are the *dithār*.”

<sup>181</sup> *ḡawmun lā maradda labu minā 'llābi.*

allotted shares will come to you inevitably, even if you do not hanker after them. Unless you have already received your quota in full, you will not be made to leave this world.

Woe unto you, O deluded fool! You must stop being so attached to the lower self [*nafs*] and to passionate desire [*hawā*], for you have no escape from death. There is no force to counter death. Whichever way you face, and however you twist and turn, it is both the leader in front of you and the follower behind you. There is no need for you to worry about the Day of Resurrection, since the day of your death is an individual resurrection for you personally, while the Day of Resurrection is a universal occasion for you and for everyone else. The first resurrection will show you the second Resurrection. When you see the Angel of Death (peace be upon him), he will come to you with a cheerful grin on his face, and his assistants will be grinning just as merrily. They will salute you with the greeting of peace, and they will take away your spirit [*rūḥ*] with a gentle touch, as they took the spirits of the Prophets [*anbiyā'*], the martyrs [*shuhadā'*] and the righteous [*ṣāliḥīn*] (may the blessing and peace of Allāh be upon them, each and every one). You can therefore rejoice at the good news concerning the resurrection on the first day. The angel and his assistants will also show you [what lies in store for you on] the second Day. If what you see is good, your prospects are good, but if what you see is bad, your prospects are bad.

The Angel of Death (peace be upon him) came to Moses (blessing and peace be upon him) with an apple in his hand. He let him smell the apple, then took away his spirit while he was inhaling the scent. The same kind of treatment will be accorded to anyone whose status is that of a person close to Allāh. The Angel of Death will take his spirit as smoothly as possible, and in the most beautiful way.

You must die before you die [*mūtū qabla an tamūtū*]<sup>1</sup>—to your lower selves [*nufūs*] and your own will [*irāda*]. You must make a frequent practice of remembering death, and prepare for it before it comes, for thus you will die before you actually die. Death will then be smooth and easy for you, since you will have ceased to carry the heavy burden of anxiety and care. The coming of the day of death is absolutely inevitable, as is the coming of the Day of Resurrection, so you must expect them both. These two days have been ordained by Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He).

Be sensible! As far as I can see, you have no hearts, nor any awareness of the heart. Woe unto you! You claim to practice abstinence [*zuhd*], and you dress in the garb of the ascetics [*zuhhād*], but then you go knocking at the doors of kings and rich men, those folk who are the sons of this world, for your lower self [*nafs*] is attracted to people who are interested in worldly things, and it feels a keen desire to engage in their pursuits. Surely you must know the saying of the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace):

If someone keeps hovering around the edge of the forbidden zone, he is very likely to end up trespassing inside it.<sup>182</sup>

Preoccupation with the business of this world can only hinder the progress of the servants of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He). It holds them up like a highway robber, exposes them to ridicule, and seizes control of their minds. This is a common plight, affecting everyone apart from the few exceptions willed by Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He). In the case of these few rare individuals, Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) takes charge of their hearts and their actions, and keeps them safe under His protection in both their private and their public lives. Their food, their drink and their clothing are made available to them by the hand of Divine Power [*Qudra*].

The people [of the Lord] have acted in accordance with the message brought by the Messenger [*Rasūl*] (Allāh bless him and give him peace), so the Sender [*Mursil*] has been well pleased and He has taken care of them and treated them with love. They looked for the neighbor [*jār*] before deciding on the purchase of the house [*dār*], and they sought the companion [*rafiq*] before setting out to travel the road [*ṭarīq*]. What is this “neighbor”? The nearness [*qurb*] of the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He), intimate knowledge [*ma‘rifa*] of Him, faith [*īmān*] in Him, total trust [*tawakkul*] in Him, and confident reliance [*thiqa*] on His promise. Their hearts had acquired real understanding, so they turned away from the house of this world, and from the house of the hereafter as well. They stood aside from them both.

O heedless ones! None of this that I have explained to you can come about except through putting it into practice and becoming deeply immersed in it, sometimes with the limbs and organs of the physical

<sup>182</sup> *man ḥāma ḥawla ‘l-ḥimā yūshik an yaqā’a fih.*

body, and at other times with the heart; sometimes in word, and at other times in deed; sometimes by speaking out, but then at other times by holding one's tongue. There are times when you must be active, and times when you must refrain from striving. You must know when to work and when to relax. You must not let the work be influenced by any motive other than the Truth [*Hāqq*], and there is no merit in actions performed merely for the sake of making a good impression.

When a person is fully capable of putting all this into practice, the motivation he experiences will come from Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), for He will say to him: "Start moving! Step forward! Open your eye! Look with the eye of your head—and now with the eye of your heart—and see what has come to you from Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) in accordance with His decree!"

The people [of the Lord] are always extremely modest about themselves, and their attitude is one of great humility. They continue to behave like this, until they are raised up high by the One for whose sake they kept themselves on such a humble plane.

The true believer [*mu'min*] must always take great pains to distribute whatever goods he has at his disposal, and seek to apply them to charitable purposes, because he is well aware that he has a fondness for possessions. Though he always finds what he needs when the need arises, he is careful to exercise pious restraint, and does not indulge in the enjoyment of everything that is available to him. He must leave many things untouched, in order to get hold of something he can appreciate to the fullest extent, something of which he knows both the root and the branch. He must check every item to see where it really belongs, and then dispose of it accordingly. If he has in his possession an inheritance from his father and his mother, but the learned scholars say that this was not acquired by pious means, he must give it away to the poor and the needy.

O you who claim to have a commitment, your commitment is not yet mature, as long as you are trying to keep something hidden from the One to whom you are supposed to be committed. You still say things like "I have," and "my property," but the lover [*muhibb*] has no property of his own, no interest of his own, no safe deposit of his own, no purpose of his own, and no home of his own in relation to his Beloved [*Mahbūb*]. It all belongs to the One he seeks, to the One he loves. The lover is a slave, a

humble servant in the presence of his Beloved, and the slave belongs to his Master, as does anything the slave himself may own.

Once the surrender [*taslīm*] of the lover to the Beloved is total and complete, the Beloved will hand back to the lover everything He has received from him, and will entrust it all to his care. The state of affairs will thus be transformed. The slave will now become a free man; the humble servant, a noble dignitary; the one who had to keep his distance, a close companion; the lover, a loved one. When [the legendary lover] Majnūn was able to persevere with patience, Laylā became Majnūn and Majnūn became Laylā.<sup>183</sup> If someone perseveres with patience in loving Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), if he is genuinely sincere in his love for Him, and if he never runs away from His door to escape the arrows of His afflictions, but accepts them with the honest sincerity of his heart, that person will come to be one who is loved, desired and sought after. Anyone who has tasted this will really know the nature of the experience. This is not something that can come about through artificial means. It is something from beyond the mental comprehension of all creatures, with the exception of a few rare individuals amongst them. Whether or not their fellow creatures understand, it is all the same to these special few. In love they have their dwelling place. In response to the slightest signal, they rally to the call and perform whatever task is required of them.

O my people! You must work hard to acquire faith. You must strive for it by making some very serious efforts to discipline your own lower selves [*anfūs*]. To give them exercise in faith, you must submit them to a trainer [*rā' id*] who speaks the kind of language they really understand. Your lower selves [*nufūs*] are lazy and unruly, full of arrogance and haughty pride.

On the path of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) there is no room for “This is mine” and “That belongs to me.” This path is the way of

<sup>183</sup> In the Forty-first Discourse of *The Sublime Revelation [al-Faṭḥ ar-Rabbānī]* Shaikh ‘Abd al-Qādir (may Allāh be well pleased with him) has given us this beautiful version of the story of Majnūn and his love for Laylā:

Your Beloved will expel from your heart all creatures between the heavenly Throne and the surface of the earth, so you will love neither this world nor the hereafter. You will be estranged from you, and feel at home with Him. You will come to resemble Laylā’s Majnūn, who was so obsessed with love for her that he shunned his fellow creatures and preferred to live in isolation, having only the wild animals for company. He left civilization behind and preferred to be in desolate places. He moved away from the praise and blame of people. Their speech and their silence became one and the same to him; it was all the same to him whether they viewed him with favor or with displeasure. One day he was asked: “Who are you?” “Laylā,” said he. He was blind to everything apart from her, and deaf to hearing any speech but hers. He would not give her up because of any kind of criticism.

obliteration [*maḥw*] and extinction [*fanāʾ*]. At the outset, when faith is still weak, the believer makes his affirmation in the words: “There is none worthy of worship but Allāh [*lā ilāha illa ʾllāh*].” But in the final stage, when faith is strong, he utters the words: “There is none worthy of worship but You [*lā ilāha illā Anta*],” because he is addressing One who is actually Present [*yukhāṭibu Ḥāḍiran Shāhidan*].

A commandment from within [*amr min bāṭin*]. A mystery within a mystery [*sirr fī sirr*]. A gracious favor among gracious favors [*naḥḥa min naḥḥāt*]. This is why the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) has told us:

During the days of your lifetime, Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) has gracious favors to confer. Surely you ought to be vying for them!

O you hypocrite [*munāfiq*], the fact of the matter is that you will not do what I say, because you do not treat me as someone who is telling the truth. If you have any intention of doing what I say, you must repent, give up your hypocrisy, and be sincere in all the work you do. You must abstain from your worldly interests, and from everything else apart from Him. This instruction is intended for your benefit. What it requires of you first of all is the affirmation [*shahāda*] that there is none worthy of worship but Allāh, and that Muḥammad is Allāh’s Messenger (Allāh bless him and give him peace). Then its ultimate requirement is that you must be equally indifferent to stone and clay [*al-ḥajar wa ʾl-madar*].<sup>184</sup> The “stone” I have in mind is the gold that is the darling of creatures and the object of their desire. O young man, you must stiffen your resolve! As far as I can see, you have neither a beginning nor a conclusion. You are not putting real meaning into the affirmation: “There is none worthy of worship but Allāh [*lā ilāha illa ʾllāh*]; Muḥammad is Allāh’s Messenger [*Muḥammadun rasūlu ʾllāh*].” You are not fulfilling its stipulations. Nor can you be one of the special few [*khawāṣṣ*], since for that you must have reached the stage where “stone and clay” [the rough and the smooth] are equally indifferent as far as you are concerned. Well then, what are you? How should we refer to you? How are we to classify you, when you do not fit into either category, neither the first nor the last?

You would like me to commend you for something you do not actually have within you, just to keep your lower self [*nafs*] happy, so that you

<sup>184</sup> The expression *al-ḥajar wa ʾl-madar* is commonly used as an idiom for “the hard life of the desert and the soft life of urban civilization.”



would feel pleased with me and want to give me presents. Shame on you! I am speaking the truth, and I am not afraid of being criticized by anyone. I am here to issue a timely exhortation, caught between creatures [*khalq*] and the Creator [*Khāliq*], between those who will not act and those who will act, between that which is not done properly and that which is done properly.

You are so ignorant. Woe unto you! You must not treat me as your enemy, for you will perish if you do so. Do not be one of those people who adopt a hostile attitude toward things they know nothing about. You knew nothing about me, yet you adopted a hostile attitude toward me, so your senseless hostility will surely be the cause of your downfall.

If Allāh causes you to suffer some injury, or afflicts you with His tribulation, no one but He is capable of removing it. So there is no point in saying to another feeble creature like yourself: “Relieve me of this trouble into which I have fallen!” If sickness comes your way, or abuse at the hands of your fellow creatures, as when they rob you of your honor or your property, there is no one who can remove the suffering—no one but He. If you suffer financial loss, or painful hunger, or rejection on the part of neighbors and brothers, to the point where they refuse to give you a morsel or a crumb, so that you feel crushed by the weight of it all, and it seems that the whole wide world has shrunk to a tight and narrow space, you must be wholeheartedly convinced that all of this has come from Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), that there is no one—no one but He—who is capable of taking all of this away, and that the only one who can remove it is He who caused it all to happen.

Be sensible, and do not make idols of your fellow creatures and material means [*asbāb*], by treating them as if they were partners of Allāh (Exalted is He). You must acknowledge only one Lord [*Rabb*], not many lords [*arbāb*]. The One you must acknowledge is the Master who compels obedience [*al-Musakhkhir*]. He is the Sovereign who exercises absolute dominion [*al-Mutasallit*]. He is the Ruler [*al-Ḥākim*]. He is the Judge [*al-Qāḍī*]. He is the Doer [*al-Fā‘il*]. Along comes His decree of destiny, with sickness in its hand, and it knocks at the door of your good health. Along comes His decree of destiny, with hardship in its hand, and it knocks at the door of your prosperity. Along comes His decree of destiny, with misfortunes in its hand, and it knocks at the door of your happiness.

Along comes His decree of destiny, with fear in its hand, and it knocks at the door of your sense of security. All of this comes from Him, and there is no one—no one but He—who is capable of taking any of it away.

This world is the prison of the true believer [*mu'min*]. Since he is trapped and confined inside it, his feet cannot take him anywhere. In order to escape, he must have recourse to spiritual experience [*ma'rifa*], for then the walls of the prison will be demolished and the gates will stand open before him. His heart will be equipped with feathered wings, so he can fly to the realm of the knowledge [*'ilm*] of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), to join the spirits [*arwāḥ*] that are already there. This is utterly beyond the scope of your mental comprehension. The hearts and spirits of the people [of the Lord] take their food from the dish of the gracious favor of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), even while they are still in this world, just as the spirits of the martyrs [*shuhadā'*] enjoy their food in the Garden of Paradise. This happens in the here and now. For those who are completely detached from the realm of creation, the here and now is the kingdom of the heart, so they are kings in this world and kings in the hereafter, chieftains in this world and chieftains in the hereafter.

O ignoramus! O hypocrite! O slave of the gold coin [*dīnār*] and the silver coin [*dirham*]! O you whose happiness depends on the praise and applause of your fellow creatures, you are the slave of praise, applause and rewards. If you had any common sense, you would inscribe upon your own lower self [*nafs*] the words of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He):

Surely we belong to Allāh, and to him we are returning. (2:156)<sup>185</sup>

You would also inscribe the words: “There is no power, nor is there any strength, except through Allāh, the High, the Almighty.”<sup>186</sup>

O Allāh, grant that we may experience the reality of servitude to You, and that we may be truly sincere in our obedience to You.

Our Lord! Give us in this world good, and good in the hereafter, and guard us against the torment of the fire! (2:201)<sup>187</sup>

<sup>185</sup> *innā li'llāhi wa innā ilaihi rāji'ūn.*

<sup>186</sup> *lā ḥawla wa lā quwwata illā bi'llāhi 'l-'Alīyyi 'l-'Azīm.*

<sup>187</sup> *Rabbanā ātinā fi 'd-dunyā ḥasanatan wa fi 'l-ākhirati ḥasanatan wa qinā 'adbāba 'n-nār.*

## The Twenty-ninth Discourse

For the truly honest person [*ṣādiq*] there can be no movement to the rear. He is always moving to the fore. He has a front without a back.<sup>188</sup> He never ceases to behave with honest sincerity, so that his speck of dust eventually becomes a mountain, his drop of water an ocean, his tiny portion a great deal, his lamp a sun, and his shell a kernel [*lubb*].

If you ever have the good fortune to come across a truly honest person, you must stick close to him always, wherever he may lead you. If you are lucky enough to come across a person who holds the remedy to cure your sickness, you must stick close to him at all times. If you are lucky enough to come across a person who can show you how to recover the opportunities you have wasted on nothing better than garbage, you must stick close—really close—to him!

You may never get to know such people as these, however, for they are no more than a few rare individuals. The outer shell is plentiful, but the kernel is in short supply. The shells are in the public garbage dumps, but the kernels are in the private storerooms of the landowner. Whenever a heart is filled with the things of this world, and with the desires and lusts of the flesh, that heart is merely a shell, fit for no purpose beyond this lower world. As long as you can still detect within your heart any trace of the products of creation, you are doomed to suffer punishment.

<sup>188</sup> This is a recurring theme in the discourses of Shaikh 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī (may Allāh be well pleased with him), as witness the following passages from *The Sublime Revelation [al-Faṭḥ ar-Rabbānī]*. (See pp. 29, 321 and 463 of the translation published by Al-Baz):

In relation to ordinary people, the friends of Allāh [*awliyā'ullāh*] are deaf, dumb and blind [*ṣummun bukmun 'umyun*].... For they are between the Majesty [*jalāl*] and the Beauty [*jamāl*] (of the Lord), inclining neither to the right nor to the left. They have a "forwards" [*amām*] without a "backwards" [*lawārā'*]....

What I am involved in does not bring about change through the tongue, but only through the inner core [*janān*]. No right, no left and no behind, but only straight ahead. A front without a back.

The distinctive feature of the saint [*walī*] is that he is ready to comply with the wishes of his Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He) under all circumstances.... He will come to be a front without a back, a nearness with no remoteness, a pure serenity with no murky confusion, a goodness with no evil.

Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) has told us:

I have not created the jinn and humankind except to serve Me. I seek no provision from them, nor do I ask that they should feed Me. Surely Allāh is the All-Providing One, the Possessor of Strength, the Ever-Sure. (51:56–58)<sup>189</sup>

Most of you are out of touch with reality. You are pretending to practice Islām, when in actual fact you are doing nothing of the kind. Woe unto you! The mere name of Islām will do you no good at all. You may be performing the required observances [*sharā' it*], but only on the surface [*ẓāhir*], devoid of inner content [*bāṭin*], so your performance does not amount to anything of value. Your external form may be there in the prayer-niche [*mihrāb*], but your inner being is putting on a show and your outer self is playing the hypocrite. From a superficial point of view, your conduct is considered pious and devout, even though all the while your inner being is full of things that are unlawful [*ḥarām*].

This constitutes worshipful devotion [*ta' abbud*] as far as your physical frame is concerned. Its performance will therefore render you outwardly exempt from punishment under the sacred law [*shar'*], since you have not committed any obvious infringement of that law, but true knowledge [*'ilm*] will condemn you to agony and chastisement. You may see yourself as having dodged the penalty today, but who will let you get away with it tomorrow [at the Resurrection]?

You may see yourself as having been exonerated in the view of the legal experts [*ahl al-ḥukm*], but how can you pass for blameless in the sight of the people of knowledge [*ahl al-'ilm*], when they see by the light of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) and recognize the Truth [*Ḥaqq*] by indications with which they are familiar? As seen through the eyes of the common folk, you are a person who performs the ritual prayers [*muṣallī*], who keeps the fast [*ṣā' im*], who constantly extols the glory of the Lord [*musabbih*],<sup>190</sup> who pays the alms-due [*muzakkī*], who makes the

<sup>189</sup> *wa mā kbalagtu 'l-jinna wa 'l-insa illā li-yā'budūn—mā urīdu minbum min rizqin wa mā urīdu an yuṭ'imūn—inna 'llāba Huwa 'r-Razzāqu Dhu 'l-quwwati 'l-matīn.*

<sup>190</sup> In this context, the term *musabbih* almost certainly requires us to envision a person who is always handling the *subḥa*, a string of ninety-nine beads with a marker after each set of thirty-three. While counting these beads, one performs the act of *tasbīḥ*, meaning the repetition of the praises of the Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He), generally by repeating the words *subḥāna 'llāh* [Glory be to Allāh] thirty-three times, *al-ḥamdu lillāh* [Praise be to Allāh] thirty-three times, and *Allāhu Akbar* [Allāh is Supremely Great] thirty-three times.

pilgrimage to Mecca [*ḥājj*], who behaves with pious restraint [*mutawarri'*], who is devoted to duty [*muttaqī*] and dedicated to abstinence [*zāhid*].

In the eyes of the people of knowledge, on the other hand, you are a hypocrite [*munāfiq*], an impostor [*dajjāl*], a denizen of Hell [*jahannamī*]. As soon as you come into their presence, they will notice the ruined state of your house, the house of your religion [*dīn*]. They will spot the mark of hypocrisy on your face. They will recognize you at once by your telltale demeanor, and yet they will not say so in words. The nearness of the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He) has sealed their mouths, His protective covering has kept their tongues in check, and the tongue of His noble generosity and forbearance restrains them. Were it not for this, they would not seem so tolerant!

O you hypocrites! You must practice the reality of Islām, so that faith [*īmān*] may come to you, and then conviction [*īqān*], direct experience [*ma'rifā*], intimate conversation [*munājāt*], and confidential discourse [*muḥādatha*]. Be sensible! Do not be satisfied with the outer forms [*ṣuwar*], devoid of their spiritual contents [*ma'ānī*]. Perform your duties, and do so with sincere devotion, for then you will be saved. For scholars, the way to get a firm grasp on knowledge is by putting it into practice.<sup>191</sup> He who gives service will be well served. He who behaves humbly and modestly will be promoted to high rank. You must act as a servant, for then you will come to be a master [*sayyid*]. Surely you have heard the saying: "The master of the people is their servant."<sup>192</sup> As for you, you do an excellent job when it comes to serving yourself, your wife and your children. You are very stingy with your money in relation to the poor, although you spend it freely on your personal whims and selfish interests.

O you backslider! The benefits you enjoy will very soon be in short supply. You are more afraid of the policeman on your street, and of the swindler [*duwālī*]<sup>193</sup> who operates in your neighborhood, than you are afraid of your Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He). You give them gifts

<sup>191</sup> *akbδbu 'l-'ulamā' i bi'l-'ilmi 'l-'amalu bib.*

<sup>192</sup> *sayyidu 'l-qawmi kbādimubum.*

<sup>193</sup> It is interesting, from a cultural as well as a linguistic point of view, to note the use of the Persian word *duwālī* in this context. For the citizen of medieval Baghdād, the connotation may well have been somewhat similar to that of a term like the Italian *mafioso* in current American English usage.

and offer them presents, because they might spread the word that your home is in a shambles, and your credit likewise. Woe unto you! The time is near at hand, when all your wealth will disappear, when your friends—or rather, those wicked companions of yours—will leave you in the lurch and treat you as their enemy, and when your local policeman and your neighborhood swindler will both expose you to disgrace, because you can no longer bribe them to keep quiet.

How can you expect to receive the grace of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), when you keep spending His blessings on acts of sinful disobedience against Him? You will soon be reduced to begging, but no one will give you a handout, and you will end up living in the refuse dumps and sewers. It may be that death will come to you while you are in this sorry state, in which case you will accept it as a welcome release from wretched misery.

Be sensible, and feel a sense of shame in the presence of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He)! This world cannot last for ever, but the hereafter will endure eternally. The pleasures of this world do not linger very long, but everlasting are the delights of the hereafter. The true believer [*mu'min*] trades this world for the hereafter, and the creation [*khalq*] for the Creator [*Khāliq*].

Among the people [of the Lord], there are some who must undergo the following experience: At the very point where the person concerned has come to be completely satisfied with Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), to the exclusion of his fellow creatures and of everything else on earth, He saddles him with the responsibility of caring for dependents and providing for their support. This is to make him go back to his fellow creatures and accept things from them, so that his receiving from them may be an act of mercy toward them. Thus poverty will be his outwardly apparent condition [*ẓāhir*], while his freedom from want remains as an inner state of being [*bāṭin*]. In other words, his freedom from want will be a private matter, while his poverty is visible to the public at large.

Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) may effect the transformation of His servants through what He shows them in their dreams, and they will surely receive an education in the process. First of all, He lets them see the Book and the Sunna. They practice what they learn from these, and so they become devout [*muttaqīn*]. Then He lets them see the Messenger

(Allāh bless him and give him peace) in their dreams, telling them to do this and that, and to refrain from doing this and that. Then they see their Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He) in their dreams, and He will tell them what they must or must not do. Thus they progress from grade to grade, from textbook to textbook, from classroom to classroom, from commemoration to commemoration.<sup>194</sup>

As seen through the eyes of the true believer [*mu'min*], all creatures are but one single individual, and that individual is a decrepit invalid, who is capable neither of procuring any benefit for himself, nor of preventing himself from suffering any harm. The true believer hates those of his fellow creatures who disobey his Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He), and he loves those who obey Him, for he concurs with Him where hating and loving are concerned. He does not love his fellow creatures on account of what they may give him, and his hatred of them is not motivated by his self-interest [*nafs*] or his passionate desires [*hawā*]. He is always detached from the influence of the lower self, and he only goes along with it when it is ready to obey Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He). He obliges this world to keep its distance from his heart. He is ever steadfast in his commitment to the religion [*dīn*] of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), observing its provisions with the utmost respect, and always prepared to come to its aid.

Woe unto you! It is the heart that must practice abstinence, not merely the body. O you who act like a pious ascetic on the surface [*mutazāhid aẓ-ẓāhir*], your abstinence will be thrown straight back at you. You have seen to it that your turban and your gown will be kept in fine condition, and you have buried your gold in the ground, and only then you have donned that coarse hair shirt [*mish*] and assumed an attitude of humble piety. May Allāh cut off your skin and your head, if you do not repent! You have opened a shop in which you offer hypocrisy [*nifāq*] for sale. May Allāh make your shop collapse on top of you, so as to flatten you beneath it! Will you never learn? You must repent. You must cut the waistband [that marks you as an unbeliever].<sup>195</sup>

<sup>194</sup> *min darajatin ilā daraja—min kitābin ilā kitāb—min dārin ilā dār—min dbikrin ilā dbikr.*

<sup>195</sup> The *zunnār*, a kind of girdle or waistband traditionally worn by non-Muslims (especially Christians) was often used by Islamic authors as a symbol of imperfect faith. In the Forty-third Discourse of *The Sublime Revelation [al-Faṭḥ ar-Rabbānī]*, Shaikh 'Abd al-Qādir (may Allāh be well pleased with him) says:

Woe unto you! In the case of the true believer [*mu' min*], his abstinence is in his heart, while the nearness of his Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He) is in his innermost being [*sirr*]. Both this world and the hereafter are at his door, inside his storeroom, not right inside him. His heart is empty of anything other than his Master [*Mawlā*]. How can he even hear anyone besides Him, when he is filled with Him, with the remembrance of Him and with His nearness? His heart is broken on account of his Master, so He must surely be with him, because Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) has said in one of His utterances:

I am with those whose hearts are broken on My account.

Your lower selves [*nufūs*] are broken on account of the loss of this world, while their hearts are broken on account of the Master [*Mawlā*].<sup>196</sup> But then, once they are really and truly broken-hearted, He comes to them and mends their broken state. The Physician comes along and treats their condition. This is the true bliss, not the bliss of this world and the hereafter. The people [of the Lord] are sick, but their Physician is with them. They are sick in the presence of their Physician, sleeping in the bay of His protection and His tender care, while He treats them with the hand of grace and kindness and compassion.

If anyone backs away, he will not be the one to succeed. You must sit in the company of the people [of the Lord] and listen to what they have to say. You must befriend them for the sake of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), not for the sake of this world, for then He will cause you to benefit from them. You must acquire knowledge and put it into practice, so that you may derive benefit from the knowledge you acquire. Knowledge is like the sword, while practice is like the hand. A sword will not cut anything without a hand to wield it, nor can a hand do any cutting without a sword. You must study outwardly [*ẓāhiran*] and be sincere

There is nothing to be said until you cut the waistband [*zunnār*], renew your Islām, truly repent with your heart, and leave the house of your natural urges [*ṭabī*], your passions [*bawā*], your existence [*wujūd*], and your efforts to attract benefit to you and repel harm from you.

<sup>196</sup> On p. 99 of the Al-Baz translation of his *Utterances* [*Malḥūzāt*], Shaikh 'Abd al-Qādir (may Allāh be well pleased with him) has this to say on the subject of the broken-hearted:

The hearts of ordinary people get broken over things of this world. With the élite [*kbawāṣṣ*] it is over [the loss] of some otherworldly pleasure. As for the élite of the élite [*kbawāṣṣ al-kbawāṣṣ*], their hearts get broken over losing contact with the Master [*Mawlā*], or because a veil descends after insight had been granted. Each group experiences its own particular form of heartbreak, but few indeed are those exceptional individuals whose heartbreak is for the sake of the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He).



about it inwardly [*bāṭinan*], for you will not be given a speck of dust without sincerity [*ikhhlās*].

You must listen attentively to the Qur'ān, and put what you hear into practice. The Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He) has only sent it down so that you may use it to get in touch with Him. It has two edges, one edge being in His hand and one edge in our hands. If you put it into practice, He will cause your hearts to climb up to Him. He will install your hearts in the abode of His nearness, while you are still here in this world, before you pass on to the hereafter.

If you wish to attain to contact with Him, you must practice detachment from this world and your fellow creatures. You must practice detachment from your own lower self [*nafs*], your family, your property, your carnal appetites, your dubious habits, and your fondness for the praise, approval and attention of your fellow creatures. If you can really experience this, you will find yourself able to do without them altogether. Your stomach will be fully fed, your liver will be well and truly irrigated, your inner being [*bāṭin*] and your private life will flourish and prosper, your heart and your innermost being [*sirr*] will glow with light, and your lower self [*nafs*] will be calm and tranquil.

All this will come about as the result of your putting into practice what you learn from the Qur'ān. This Qur'ān is an illuminating sun, so you must install it in the houses of your hearts, in order to let it shine its light for you. Woe unto you! If you put out the lamps, how can you see what is right there in front of you, in the darkness of the night?

Obey Allāh and the Messenger when He calls you to that which brings you to life. (8:24)<sup>197</sup>

A heart that is dead, how can it see? A heart that is dead through the influence of this world and the love thereof, the love of creatures and their good opinion, how can it hear? What can it hear and see? Get to know creatures really well, and you will eventually come to detest them, O you who are dead at heart through the pursuit of this world, through your eager desire to possess it and your fondness for what it has to offer!

As for you, O pious abstainers, your quest for the Garden of Paradise has distracted you from your Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He). Woe unto you! If you wish to find the right track, you must get your priorities

<sup>197</sup> [*ijstajībū li'llābi wa li'r-rasūli idbā da'ākum li-mā yuhyikum*].

right. The neighbor must come before the house [*al-jār qabla 'd-dār*] and the companion before the path [*ar-rafiq qabla 't-tariq*].

In your case, O preachers [*wu' 'āz*], you have promoted yourselves to the position of the Prophets (may the blessing and peace of Allāh be upon them all). You have put yourselves forward into the front rank, but you are not skilled in tactical maneuver and the art of combat. You must come down to earth and learn some lessons. You must put what you learn into practice, and you must do so sincerely. Then you can aspire to the heights.

There can be no success in this business except through combat with the lower self [*nafs*], the passions [*hawā*], the natural inclinations [*tab'*], the devil [*shaiṭān*], the influence of this world [*dunyā*], and the desires of the flesh [*shahawāt*]. It also requires detachment from one's fellow creatures, and ceasing to regard them as the cause of injury or the source of benefit. Once you have gained the upper hand over all of these adversaries, once you have conquered and subdued them through the strength of your faith [*īmān*], your conviction [*iqān*] and your affirmation of the Divine Unity [*tawḥīd*], the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He) will set His seal upon your heart and your innermost being [*sirr*], and He will establish their residence in the abode of His nearness. Then He will command the pair of them [your heart and your innermost being] to go forth and deal with them [your fellow creatures], for by now you will be an expert in the tactics of maneuvering among the ranks, knowing how to put up with people and how to contend with their problems.

O Allāh, let us devote our energies to work that will earn us Your good pleasure, and:

Give us in this world good, and good in the hereafter, and guard us against the torment of the fire! (2:201)<sup>198</sup>



<sup>198</sup> *ātīnā fi 'd-dunyā ḥasanatan wa fi 'l-ākhirati ḥasanatan wa qinā 'adbāba 'n-nār.*

## The Thirtieth Discourse

As written in the Arabic script, the word *Ramaḍān* is made up of five letters, namely, *rāʾ*, *mīm*, *ḍād*, *alif* and *nūn*. The initial *rāʾ* stands for *rahma* [mercy] and *raʾfa* [compassionate kindness]. The *mīm* stands for *mujaẓẓāt* [recompense], *maḥabba* [loving affection] and *minna* [gracious favor]. The *ḍād* stands for *ḍamān* [guarantee], meaning the assurance of spiritual reward. The *alif* is the first letter of the Arabic word *ulfa*,<sup>199</sup> meaning intimate affection and nearness. The final *nūn* stands for *nūr* [light] and *nawāl* [the receiving of benefit].

If you give this month [of fasting] its proper due, and perform its requirements as you should, all of these things will come to you from the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He). In this world, you will receive them as an enlightenment for your hearts, and as a blessing and benefit to be enjoyed both outwardly and inwardly. In the hereafter, you will receive that which no eye has ever seen and no ear has ever heard of, and which has never even occurred to any human heart.

Most of you will get nothing of any value out of the month of fasting [*shahr aṣ-ṣiyām*]. Respect for the commandment [*iḥtirām al-amr*] is in proportion to the respect that is paid to the One who commands it [*iḥtirām al-Āmir bih*]. So how can a person derive any benefit from this month, if he is one of those who have no respect for Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), His Messengers [*rusul*], His Prophets [*anbiyāʾ*], and the righteous [*ṣāliḥīn*] among His servants (may the blessing and peace of Allāh be upon them all)?

Most people have seen their fathers, their mothers and their neighbors keeping the fast, so they have fasted along with them—as a matter of

<sup>199</sup> In the Arabic script, an initial letter *alif* merely serves to indicate that the word concerned begins with a vowel. An extra sign is sometimes added to indicate whether that vowel is *a*, *i*, or *u*. When *alif* occurs between two consonants, however, (e.g., between the letters *ḍād* and *nūn* in the word *Ramaḍān*) it indicates the long vowel *ā*.

habit [*āda*], not as an act of worship [*‘ibāda*].<sup>200</sup> They suppose that fasting means nothing more than abstaining from food and drink, so they fail to observe its preconditions [*sharā‘it*] and its basic rules [*arkān*].

O my people! You must give up habitual behavior and make a regular practice of worshipful service. Fast for the sake of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), then you will experience the glory of devoting this month to fasting and worship. Perform your duties, and perform them with sincere devotion. Always take part in the *tarāwīḥ* prayers.<sup>201</sup> Contribute to the illumination of the mosques [*masājīd*], for this will earn you a light on the Day of Resurrection. If you provide food [at the times of breaking fast] for the sake of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), and if you honor and respect this month in every way, then Ramaḍān will be an intercessor [*shafī‘*] on your behalf in the presence of your Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He). It will show its appreciation of you by begging Him to grant you a share of His abundant grace, His noble generosity, His bountiful blessings, His loving favor, His gentle compassion, His tender care and His safekeeping.

Woe unto you! What good can it do you to keep the fast, when you break it on forbidden food [*ḥarām*], and when you sleep with sin during these noble nights? And what about you there? Woe unto you, too! You fast out of ostentation [*riyā‘*] and hypocrisy [*nifāq*] as long as you are among your fellow creatures, but you break your fast as soon as you are all by yourself. Then you go out and say: “I am keeping the fast.” Yet the whole day long you are speaking ill of people, making slanderous accusations and swearing false oaths. You are cheating people of their goods, by giving them short change, playing clever tricks and practicing outright extortion. This can do you no good at all, and it does not count

<sup>200</sup> The contrast between *āda* [habitual behavior] and *‘ibāda* [worshipful service] is a recurring theme in the works of Shaikh ‘Abd al-Qādir (may Allāh be well pleased with him). For instance, in the Second Discourse of *The Sublime Revelation* [*al-Faṭḥ ar-Rabbānī*] (p. 23 of the Al-Baz edition), he says:

Till when this ignorance and dallying with vanities, this attachment to the self [*nafs*], desire [*hawā*] and habit [*āda*]? Why do you not make a practice of worshipful service [*‘ibāda*] to the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He) and obedience to His sacred law? *‘Ibāda* [worshipful service] means giving up *āda* [familiar habit].

<sup>201</sup> The word *tarwīḥa* (of which *tarāwīḥ* is the plural) means “a pause for rest.” The *ṣalāt at-tarāwīḥ* is a special form of the Islāmic ritual prayer, performed at some period of the night in the month of Ramaḍān, after the obligatory late-night prayer [*ṣalāt al-‘ishā‘*]. It consists of twenty cycles [*rak‘āt*] (or more, according to some schools of Islāmic law), and takes its name from the pauses for rest that occur after every fourth cycle. (The salutation [*taslīm*] is pronounced at the end of each set of two cycles.)

as a fast. To quote the words of the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace):

There is many a one who fasts, yet who gets nothing out of his fasting but hunger and thirst. And there is many a one who spends the night in prayer, yet who gets nothing from his praying apart from fatigue and insomnia.<sup>202</sup>

There are some among you who are Muslims to all outward appearances, but who are more like idol-worshippers [*ʿabadat al-aṣnām*] on the inside. Woe unto you! You must renew your Islām, your repentance, your apology and your sincere commitment, so that your Master [*Mawlā*] (Almighty and Glorious is He) may accept you and pardon the sins of which you have been guilty in the past. You must make a practice of fasting [*ṣiyām*]. You should be grateful to your Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He) for the manner in which He has prepared you for the fast and enabled you to keep it. Where you are concerned, fasting should be practiced by your ears, your eyes, your hands, your feet, and all the limbs and organs of your physical body, as well as by your heart. The whole of your outer being [*ẓāhir*] should keep the fast, and the whole of your inner being [*bāṭin*] should do likewise. This means that, when you are fasting, you must refrain from telling lies, from giving false witness, from damaging the reputation of other people through backbiting, slander and defamation, and from the misappropriation of their goods. There is no point in fasting unless you pay attention to some of your sins, and rid yourselves of them, for if you indulge in them, how can you derive any benefit from your fast? Surely you must have heard the saying of the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace):

The fast is a suit of armor [*aṣ-ṣawmu junna*].

The significance of this saying of his is that a suit of armor [*junna*] shields and protects the person who wears it.<sup>203</sup> This is why a warrior's shield [*turs*] is also called a *mijanna*, because it provides protective covering for its owner, and prevents the arrows from striking him. [Another word

<sup>202</sup> *kam min ṣā'imīn laisa labu min ṣiyyāmībi illa 'l-jū' wa 'l-'aṭaṣh : wa kam min qā'imīn laisa labu min ṣalātībi illa 't-ta'ab wa 's-sabar.*

<sup>203</sup> In this and the following sentences, the significance of the saying of the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) is explained by the typically Arabic method of comparing the meanings of various terms derived from a common root of three consonant letters. In this case, the root letters are *j-n-n*, derivatives of which express aspects of the basic idea of "veiling, concealing; covering, protecting."

from the same root is applied to] a person who is out of his mind; he is called *majnūn* [crazy, insane], because his rational mind is covered up. The fast is a suit of armor for someone who fasts with an attitude of pious restraint [*tawarru'*], dutiful devotion [*taqwā*], and sincere commitment [*ikhlas*], for in this case it will indeed protect him by warding off the afflictions of this world and the hereafter.

O keeper of the fast! Give the poor and the needy a share of your food, for this will increase your spiritual reward, and it will be a sign that your fast has been accepted [by Allāh] when the time comes for you to break the fast [*iftār*].

Nothing will remain of all this affluence, except for that which you send on ahead to your account in the hereafter. You must therefore make such advance payments while you are still able to send them on ahead. On the Day of Resurrection [*Yawm al-Qiyāma*] you will be assembled hungry, thirsty, naked, afraid, abashed, terrified and humiliated. If a person provides food for others here in this world, he will be supplied with food on that Day. If someone provides water for others to drink here in this world, he will be supplied with water to drink on that Day. If someone provides clothing for others to wear in this world, he will be supplied with clothes to wear on that Day. If someone is afraid of the Lord of Truth and feels ashamed before Him here in this world, he will be able to feel safe on that Day. If someone is merciful to others here in this world, Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) will be treat him mercifully on that Day.

In this month there is a night which is the most splendid night in the whole year, and that is the Night of Power [*Lailat al-Qadr*]. It has signs by which its advent is apparent to the righteous [*ṣāliḥīn*] among the servants of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He). Those who have their eyes unveiled can see the Light of the Divine Power [*Nūr al-Ulūhiyya*], which is held in the hands of the angels, the light of their faces, the light of the gates of heaven, and the Light of the Spirit [*Rūḥ*] of the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He), because on that Night they descend from on high to the people of the earth.

O my people! Do not focus your concern upon your supply of food, for that is an ignoble concern. You have sometimes been put to the test in respect of food and drink, but you have always had sufficient in the

matter of sustenance, so do not worry about it. Glory be to the Everlasting One [*aṣ-Ṣamad*], who has no fear, who neither eats nor drinks!

Your greed never takes a rest. You must increase your pious restraint and your trustworthiness. Woe unto you! This world lasts only for an hour, so spend it in worshipful obedience. Make a practice of pious restraint [*warāʿ*] under all the circumstances in which you may find yourselves, in the affairs of this world and in the affairs of the hereafter. You will prosper if you make a practice of pious restraint, for then there will be no evidence left to support a case against you, and Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) will be well pleased with you.

A certain righteous man once appeared to someone in a dream, after his death. He was asked: “What has Allāh done with you?” To this he replied: “I performed my ritual ablution [*tawaḍḍaʿ tu*] one day in a public steam bath [*ḥammām*], then I made my way to the mosque [*masjid*]. When I was almost there, I noticed that an area on one of my feet—a spot no bigger than the size of a dirham [small coin]—had gone untouched by the water. So I went back and washed that area. It was then that the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He) said to me: ‘I have forgiven you on account of the respect you have shown for My sacred law [*sharīʿa*].’”

Where do you stand in relation to the people [of the Lord]?

Their sides shun their couches [as they call on their Lord in fear and hope]. (32:16)<sup>204</sup>

They are incapable of sleeping. How could they possibly go off to sleep, when fear is keeping them so restless and causing sleep to fly away from their eyes, and in view of the intimate friendship [*uns*] they experience in the performance of their prayers, standing erect and then bowing in prostration? They never go to sleep, except when they happen to be overwhelmed by it while making their prostration [*sujūd*]. So Glory be to the One who blesses them unexpectedly with that sleep, so that their bodies may enjoy a moment of relaxation. “Their sides shun their couches.” Their couches do not receive them. They cannot settle down on them, sometimes because of fear, sometimes because of hope, sometimes because of a sense of shame, and at another time because of an intense yearning. How little is your fear of your Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He), not to mention the insignificance of your obedience to Him!

<sup>204</sup> *tatajāfā junūbuhum ʿani l-maḍājiʿi [yadʿūna Rabbahum khawfan wa ṭamaʿā].*

But how great is the fear that is felt by the righteous, not to mention the extent of their obedience to their Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He)! When our Prophet Muḥammad (Allāh bless him and give him peace) was performing his ritual prayer [*idhā ṣallā*], the humming vibration [*azīz*] in his breast could be heard from a mile away, i.e., from a distance of three parasangs.<sup>205</sup> Such people were always afraid, in spite of the fact that they were champions of truth [*ṣiddīqūn*], Prophets [*anbiyā'*], bosom friends [*akhillā'*]<sup>206</sup> and lovers [*muhibbūn*] [of Allāh], and accustomed to having their prayers of supplication answered [*mustajāb ad-da' awāt*].

Turn your faces toward your Lord! Your faces are not turned in the direction of your Lord. You have turned away from the center and lost your balance. You show little politeness in obedience to Him, but plenty of rudeness where that is concerned. You have soon had enough of the hereafter, but even a large helping of this world is too little to satisfy you. This is not the behavior of someone who knows that he is going to die, while his Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He) will survive forever, and that his deeds will be paraded before him on the Day of Resurrection. This is not the behavior of someone who is afraid of the Reckoning and the Interrogation. This is not the behavior of someone who has no intention of being lowered into his grave without knowing whether it is one of the pits of the Fire of Hell, or one of the meadows of the Garden of Paradise.

The people [of the Lord] keep the fast throughout the day, and during the night they keep vigil and pray. When they are utterly exhausted, they fall to the ground and take a rest. "Their sides shun their couches," so

<sup>205</sup> Shaikh 'Abd al-Qādir (may Allāh be well pleased with him) has more to say about this remarkable phenomenon—and similar experiences attributed to others—in the Ninth Discourse of *Revelations of the Unseen* [*Futūḥ al-Ghaib*] (p. 26 of the translation published by Al-Baz):

To saints and *Abdāl* are disclosed such workings of Allāh as baffle the mind and defy all customs and conventions. They are of two kinds: Divine Majesty [*Jalāl*] and Divine Beauty [*Jamāl*].

Divine majesty and sublimity give rise to disconcerting fear and disquieting dread, with such a mighty impact on the heart that the effects become apparent in the physical body. Thus it is related of the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) that "from his breast during prayer one could hear a humming sound like the simmering of a cooking-pot, due to the intensity of his fear," because of his vision of the majesty of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) and the divine sublimity that was revealed to him. Similar experiences are attributed to Abraham, the special friend of the All-Merciful (on him be the blessings of Allāh), and to 'Umar al-Fārūq (may Allāh be well pleased with him).

<sup>206</sup> The Arabic word *akhillā'* is the plural of *khalīl*. The Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) is known as *Khalīlu'llāh*.



they sit on them and remain active, “as they call on their Lord in fear and hope.” They shrink from rejection and hope for acceptance, saying: “Our Lord, we have failed to conduct ourselves correctly, perfectly, with sincerity [*ikhhlās*], devoid of self-interest and arrogant pride.” Thus they shrink from rejection, then they hope to gain acceptance for their action, because it is a noble one. He accepts even a little, but He gives very much. He accepts what is bad and worthless, but He gives what is excellent. He accepts defective articles of merchandise, but He always gives in full measure.

Fear is a strict observance [*‘azīma*], while hope is a special dispensation [*rukḥṣa*]. The people [of the Lord] are in a state of oscillation between fear and hope, sometimes swinging closer to the one, and sometimes to the other. At one time they are involved with the outer [*zāhir*], at another time with the inner [*bāṭin*]. At one time giving, at another time withholding. They continue in this fashion until the script of destiny reaches its appointed conclusion, and their hearts attain to their Creator [*Khāliq*]. From that point on, there is no longer any special dispensation as far as they are concerned, and there are no longer any shades of gray. Strict observance and pure clarity are now the order of the day.

All that property of yours will follow you to the door, and your family will follow you to your graves, then they will go back home again. But your deeds will keep you company, for they will descend with you into the grave, and they will not go away and leave you there alone. O heedless ones! You ought to attach less importance to those who will go away and leave you, and more importance to those who will keep you company and never go away and leave you. You must attach more importance to righteous deeds [*‘aṣ māl ṣāliḥa*]. You must keep the fast, and you must be sincere in keeping it. You must perform your ritual prayer [*ṣalāt*], and you must perform it sincerely. You must perform the pilgrimage [*ḥajj*], and you must do so with sincerity. You must pay the alms-due [*zakāt*], and you must be sincere in paying it. You must remember your Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He), and you must be sincere in your remembrance [*dhikr*] of Him. You must serve the righteous [*ṣāliḥīn*] and draw close to them, and you must be sincere in your service to them.

Pay more attention to your own faults, and take no notice of the faults of other people. Command what is right and fair [*ma’ rāf*], and forbid

what is wrong and unfair [*munkar*]. Do not pry into the business of other people, and do not expose their private affairs. You may criticize what they choose to make public, but it is not for you to concern yourself with what they keep hidden from view. Concentrate on yourselves, and do not try to run other people's lives. Do not spend so much time discussing matters that do not concern you. As the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) has said:

Part of the excellence of a man's Islām is paying no attention to that which does not concern him.

Your own faults ought to concern you, but the faults of other people are no concern of yours. You must obey [the commandments of Allāh]. Behave correctly. Do not get angry and do not be guilty of sinful disobedience. Affirm the Divine Unity [*wahhid*] and do not associate partners with Allāh [*lā tushrik*]. Your tendency to rely on fellow creatures and material means [*asbāb*] is a form of polytheistic idolatry [*shirk*].

Woe unto you! You are bloated with indignation and resentment, whether He gives you something different or takes something away from you. Your anger is the same, whether He brings something forward or puts something back. Affliction and the removal of affliction, both are in the hand of Allāh. He has sent down the sickness, and He is the One who has created the remedy for it. If He puts you to the test, He only does so in order to make you learn about yourself through what you have to suffer, and to show you His signs [*āyāt*] and demonstrate His power [*qudra*]. By sending down the affliction and then removing it, He shows you how He can withhold His favor and bestow it. Trials and tribulations are familiarizing agents [*mu'arrifāt*]. They knock at the door of the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He). They bring the heart together with the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He). They are experts at handling all the procedures. You should not hate trials and tribulations, for there may be advantages for you in things that you find disagreeable. Just set aside all those questions like 'why?' and 'how?' If you endure the suffering with patience, it will purify you and rid you of sins both outwardly and inwardly. As the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) has told us:

The believer [*mu' min*] will always have to suffer trials and tribulations, until he walks on the earth without being guilty of a single error. His former sins will then be deleted from the scrolls and erased from memory by the angels who recorded them.

A certain righteous man would often say: “My God [*Ilāhī*], other people may love You for Your gracious favor, but I love You for Your trials and tribulations.” Another used to say, if there came a day when no affliction befell him: “My God, what sin can I have committed today, that You should deprive me of my trial and tribulation?”

Woe unto you! If you are not content to accept His decree, do not consume His sustenance, and try to find a lord apart from Him. As Allāh (Exalted is He and glorious is His estate) has said in one of His Books:

O son of Adam, if someone does not gladly accept My judgment, and is not patient in bearing My tribulation, let him try to find a Lord [*Rabb*] apart from Me, and let him depart from underneath My heaven.<sup>207</sup>

You must be patient with your Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He), for you have no Lord apart from Him. There is no second Lord aside from Him. There is no other Door [*Bāb*]. There is no other Creator [*Khāliq*]. There is no other Provider [*Rāziq*]. Be patient with this One [*Wāḥid*], no matter what temptation you may arise within you.

O Allāh, make us calm in our feelings [*muṭmaʿinnīn*], content to accept Your decree [*rāḍīn*], ready to comply with Your will [*muwāfiqīn*], Muslims who surrender and submit [*mustaslimīn*] to You, and:

Give us in this world good, and good in the hereafter, and guard us against the torment of the fire! (2:201)<sup>208</sup>



<sup>207</sup> Shaikh ‘Abd al-Qādir (may Allāh be well pleased with him) has given a slightly different version of this Divine saying in the Forty-ninth Discourse of *The Sublime Revelation [al-Faṭḥ ar-Rabbānī]*. (See p. 308 of the translation published by Al-Baz):

If someone does not gladly accept My judgment, and is not patient in bearing My tribulation, let him choose a god [*ilāh*] apart from Me.

<sup>208</sup> *ātīnā fi ‘d-dunyā ḥasanatan wa fi ‘l-ākhirati ḥasanatan wa qinā ‘adbāba ‘n-nār.*

## The Thirty-first Discourse<sup>209</sup>

**W**hen the servant really knows [*ʿarafa*] the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He), He draws his heart completely near, gives him all He has to give, accords him every mark of intimate friendship [*uns*], and confers upon him every honor. Then, when he has come to take all this for granted, He takes it away from him, reduces him to empty-handed poverty, sends him back to his ordinary self and sets up a screen between Himself and his servant. He is testing him to see how he will act, whether he will run away or stand firm. Then, if he stands firm, He removes the obstacles from him and restores him to the situation he had once enjoyed.

**Surely you must have witnessed a scene like the one I am about to describe: A father has decided to put his son to the test, so he makes the boy go out of the house, locks the door in his face, and then waits to see what he will do about it. When he sees that his son has dealt with the situation by not budging from the doorstep, rather than going next door, complaining about him to the neighbors, and forgetting his training in good behavior, the father reopens the door, takes him in his arms and hugs him, and then proceeds to treat him with extraspecial kindness.**

**Whoever a person may be, if he is not sincere in his conduct, not so much as a single atom of the nearness of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) will fall into his hand. As Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) has said in one of His utterances:**

**No one is less in need of associating with partners than I am. If anyone performs an action with the intention of involving someone other than Me as a partner in it, well, it [the action] involves the partner ascribed to Me and has nothing to do with Me. I accept only that which is done for the sake of My countenance.<sup>210</sup>**

<sup>209</sup> The passages printed in ordinary (non-bold) Jilani font are also to be found—with only minor differences almost entirely explicable as due to mistakes by the copyist of *Jalāʾ al-Khawāṭir*—in the Sixty-second Discourse of Shaikh ʿAbd al-Qādir’s work *The Sublime Revelation [al-Faṭḥ ar-Rabbānī]*. (See p. 484 of the translation published by Al-Baz.)

<sup>210</sup> *Anā Aghna ʾsh-shurakāʾi ʾani ʾsh-shirk : man ʾamala ʾamalan wa ashraka fibi ghairi fa-buwa li-sharikī dūnī: wa lā aqbalu illā mā urīda bibi wajbī.*

The Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) is reported as having said:

On the Day of Resurrection, the hypocrite [*munāfiq*] will be told: “O perfidious deceiver, O brazen liar! See if you can collect the reward for your actions from those whom you sought to please by doing them!”

O you who worship others apart from your Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He), surely you must have heard how He (Exalted is He) has told us:

I have not created the jinn and humankind except to serve Me. (51:56)<sup>211</sup>

—and His words (Exalted is He):

And they were commanded to worship only One God. (9:31)<sup>212</sup>

—as well as His words (Exalted is He):

They were commanded only to serve Allāh, keeping the religion pure for Him (98:5)<sup>213</sup>

It is the duty of every servant to serve His Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He), seeking only His countenance and His good pleasure, not for any ulterior motive and not for the sake of receiving gifts. Should there be anyone among you who is incapable of truly sincere devotion [*ikhhlās*] except when he is alone in private, let his work of piety be carried out in a secluded situation, where there is no creature’s eye to see him, and no ear to hear the sound of his voice while he is reciting the Qur’ān and proclaiming the glory of the Lord [*tasbīḥ*]<sup>214</sup>—if the Almighty Lord so will. If a certain type of worshipper [*muṣallin*] were to perform the ritual prayer [*law ṣallā*] in darkness, and any servant [of Allāh] happened to discover him doing so, even a poor old good-for-nothing beggar, he would be sure to change his bearing in order to impress the observer. Whenever a person performs an act of worship without being completely sincere, his deed is quite worthless to him.

O you who hold back from charitable spending [*infāq*], surely you must have heard the words of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He):

And [those who] expend of that which We have bestowed upon them. (2:3)<sup>214</sup>

<sup>211</sup> *wa mā khalaqtu l-jinna wa l-insa illā li-ya’budūn.*

<sup>212</sup> *wa mā umirū illā li-ya’budū llāban Wāḥidā.*

<sup>213</sup> *wa mā umirū illā li-ya’budu llāba mukbliṣina labu’d-dīn.*

<sup>214</sup> *wa mim mā razaqnāhum yunfiqūn.*

That is to say, they spend their material resources on the family, on the children, and on the needy [*masākīn*]. The miser is beyond the pale, an outcast, far removed from his fellow creatures [*khalq*] and from the Creator [*Khāliq*].

Ask your Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He) to grant you some of His bounty. You must ask Him, regardless of whether He answers you or does not respond to your request. Asking Him is in itself an act of worship [*‘ibāda*],<sup>215</sup> whether the asking takes the form of a prayer of supplication [*du‘ā*’] offered in the state of remoteness, a confidential whisper [*munājāt*] in the state of nearness, or a wordless gesture [*īmā’*] in His immediate presence. One who is in the state of remoteness must call out for help, crying: “O Lord and Master [*yā Mālik*], grant me a gift! Let me draw near to You!” One who is already near to Him has reached the point of ultra-intense energy; he merely whispers to Him in a quiet undertone, because He is so close. As for one who is seated right there by His side, he is so overwhelmed by awe that he cannot speak at all, and must therefore use the language of gesture to communicate. Even in the state of this-worldly remoteness, the Muslim can use the sign-language of appropriate behavior [*ḥusn al-adab*]. When the heart of one who is loved [by Allāh] has attained to the chamber of nearness, he has only to make the slightest gesture.

May Allāh bestow His mercy upon those who can grasp the meaning of what I am saying, and can act accordingly, ridding their hearts of all doubt and suspicion concerning me and my words, and submitting to their Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He) whatever they do not understand and are not yet able to put into practice.

<sup>215</sup> Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) has said:

Ask Allāh of His bounty—and do not covet that whereby Allāh has made some of you excel others. (4:32).

This verse [*āya*] of the Qur’ān has been cited by Shaikh ‘Abd al-Qādir (may Allāh be well pleased with him) in the Sixty-sixth Discourse of *Revelations of the Unseen [Futūḥ al-Ghaib]*—“On the commandment to make supplication, and the prohibition of omitting it”—which includes the following explanation of the seeming paradox:

As it is reported in the tradition: “The believer will see in his record, on the Day of Resurrection, some good deeds he had not done and knew nothing about. He will be asked: ‘Do you recognize them?’ So he will say: ‘I don’t know how I came by these.’ Then he will be told: ‘These are compensation for the requests you made in the abode of the lower world.’” This is because, in addressing his requests to Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), he is remembering Allāh, professing His Oneness, putting things in their proper place, giving credit where it is due, attributing nothing to his own power and strength, and forsaking pride, arrogance and haughtiness—all righteous deeds, for which there is reward with Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He). (See pp. 158–59 of the translation published by Al-Baz.)

The people [of the Lord] believe, acknowledge the truth, acquire knowledge, behave with true sincerity, and devote their material resources to the welfare of the righteous [*ṣāliḥīn*]. In spending their money on such causes, they produce convincing arguments to overcome the objections raised by their own lower selves [*nufūs*]. In one instance it may be represented as an alms-due [*zakāt*], the payment of which is obligatory under Islamic law [*mafrūda*]. On another occasion, as a non-compulsory charitable donation [*ṣadaqa*] and an act of altruism [*īthār*]. In yet another instance, as a vow [*nadhḥ*] sworn with such a solemn oath that its fulfillment is absolutely inevitable. One way or another, they always come up with the goods. Through all of this they are moving nearer to Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), because of the strength of their hearts, the firmness of their conviction [*īqān*], and their subjugation of their own lower selves.

It sometimes happens that one of them receives the order to donate a specific item from his property, so he promptly obeys the command of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He). It may also happen that one of them will simply start handing out gifts, without any conscious motive for doing so. The following story is told about one of these righteous men: Somewhere out in one of the desert regions, he had embarked on the performance of his ritual prayer [*ṣalāt*], when along came a party of tithe-collectors [*‘ashshārūn*]. One of them came and took his cloak from off his shoulder. But then, when he had just finished his prayer, the man who had taken his cloak said to him: “Please accept my apology for taking your cloak!” And he thereupon handed it back to him. “By Allāh,” said the man who had been praying, “I did not feel anything when you took it from me, and I did not feel anything when you gave it back. If you want to take it, go ahead and take it!”

The people [of the Lord] have no conscious awareness of anything other than the immediate focus of their attention. When they stand in the presence of their Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He), they are absent from everything apart from Him, absent as if gone away forever. The outer form is still present, but the heart is completely absent. One of their number was a man by the name of Muslim ibn Bashshār (may Allāh the Exalted bestow His mercy upon him). Whenever he entered his own home, his children would lose all their normal high spirits. They worked

so hard at being well-behaved that none of them could even dare to laugh. Their father was sorry to see them in such a state of inhibition, so whenever he intended to embark upon the ritual prayer [*ṣalāt*], he would turn to them and say: “Busy yourselves with things you really like to do, and stop being so depressed! Don’t worry about me, because I won’t even notice what you are doing.” Then he would start his prayer, and the children would play their favorite games, enjoying lots of fun and laughter, while he was totally unaware of what they were up to. One day, when he was praying in the congregational mosque [*jāmi‘*], one of the columns in the building happened to collapse. It fell right beside him, along with those parts of the roof it had been supporting, but he was quite unaware that it had come crashing down. On another occasion, a fire broke out in someone’s house while he was a visitor there. People came running and managed to put out the flames, but he was deep in prayer throughout all this excitement—and quite unaware of what was happening around him!

The people [of the Lord] are wholly devoted to the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He). They are wholly devoted to the welfare of their fellow creatures [*khalq*], and the Creator [*Khāliq*] is always there to support them. They put to good use whatever material property they have in their hands, and whatever knowledge [*‘ilm*] they have in their hearts. They have obtained the greatest abundance of all, so the goods of this world do not seem very important to them. They have acquired the greatest fortune of all, so the fortune of this world is quite insignificant in their eyes. They have become detached from all that exists, and their hearts have therefore been endowed with the power to bring things into being [*takwīn*]. As long as this external world remains attached to your hand and your heart, you will never have any experience of such creative power.

When somebody once asked one of these righteous men: “Where do you get your food?” he replied: “From the great full moon [*al-badr al-kabīr*].” In answer to the next question, “What is the great full moon?” he said: “Be!—and there it is [*kun fa-yakūn*].”<sup>216</sup>

<sup>216</sup> In the Qur’ān, Allāh says of Himself (Almighty and Glorious is He):

To Him belongs all that is in the heavens and the earth; all obey His will—the Creator of the heavens and the earth; and when He decrees a thing, He but says to it “Be,” and it is. (2:116,117) (Note continued next page...)



Where the affairs of this world are concerned, you must consider those who are beneath you. In matters of the hereafter, on the other hand, you must look up and pay attention to those who are above you.

The following story has been told concerning another of these righteous men: On the day of the Festival [*ʿīd*] he had bought some kind of herb or vegetable, and he mused aloud, as he was sitting there eating it: “I wonder if there can be anyone else like me, on a day like today, eating a plain vegetable with neither oil nor salt?” He happened to turn his head at that moment, and what should he see but someone eating the bits of peel as he threw them aside. He burst into tears at this sight, and begged pardon of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) for what he had just said.

O son of Adam, how stingily you treat your own self! The Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He) has asked for a loan:

Who is he who will lend unto Allāh a goodly loan? (2:245 and 57:11)<sup>217</sup>

If you lend Him the loan He asks for, accepting His promissory note in exchange for an offering to the poor, Allāh will repay you many times over. He will give you much more than you have given, both here and now and also tomorrow [at the Resurrection]. Do business with Him and you will see the profits! Do business with Him without checking His

In the present context, the reader may find it helpful to consider the the following quotations from other works by Shaikh ʿAbd al-Qādir (may Allāh be well pleased with him):

When you are in conformity with His commandment, all beings are at your command, and when you detest what He forbids, all loathsome things will flee from you wherever you happen to be or make your stay. Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) has said in one of His Books:

O son of Adam, I am Allāh; there is none worthy of worship besides Me. I say to a thing, “Be,” and it comes into being. Obey Me; I will make you such that you say to a thing, “Be,” and there it will be.

(From the Thirteenth Discourse of *Revelations of the Unseen* [*Futūḥ al-Ghaib*]; see p. 37 of the translation published by Al-Baz.)

When the servant affirms the Oneness of his Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He), and is sincere in doing so, it sometimes happens that He exercises His creative power on his behalf [*yukawwinu labu*], so that the servant enters into His creative action [*itakwin*]. At other times He will put the creative power at His servant’s disposal, so that he can exercise it on his own behalf [*yukawwinu buwa li-nafsibi*]. This He does only for His special favorites [*kbawāss*] among His creatures. Everyone who enters the Garden of Paradise will experience saying to a thing “Be!”—and having it come into being. Our present discussion is about the exercise of creative power in the here and now, not in the future.

(From the Sixty-second Discourse of *The Sublime Revelation* [*al-Faṭḥ ar-Rabbānī*]; see p. 470 of the translation published by Al-Baz.)

<sup>217</sup> *man dha ʿlladbi yuqriḍu ʿllāba qardan ḥasanan.*

credentials. Consider the example set in this regard by Ja'far ibn aṣ-Ṣādiq<sup>218</sup> (may Allāh the Exalted be well pleased with him): If he needed five hundred dīnārs [gold coins], but had no more than fifty on him at the time, he would donate them all to charity. Then, sure enough, the five hundred would come his way a few days later. Even if they had not come to him, however, he would not have doubted His Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He); he would not have raised any protest against Him, nor harbored any feeling of resentment toward Him.

The people [of the Lord] are accustomed to dealing with their Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He) in accordance with His Book and the Sunna of His Messenger (Allāh bless him and give him peace), and on the basis of a sure conviction [*yaqīn*] experienced in their hearts. It is related concerning one of these righteous men that a beggar came to him one day, asking him for some food. He had nothing in store except for three eggs, so he ordered his maidservant to give all three of them to the beggar, but she gave him only two of the eggs and hid the other one away. An hour later, a friend of the righteous man made him a present of twenty eggs, whereupon he turned to his maidservant and asked her: "Where is the other egg? How many did you give to the beggar?" She replied: "I gave him two eggs and left one for you to eat for breakfast." So he said to her: "O woman of little sure conviction, you have made us lose ten!"<sup>219</sup>

The Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) is reported as having said:

A hopeless case is he who can offer nothing but excuses to a creature like himself.

<sup>218</sup> Ja'far ibn Muḥammad ibn 'Alī ibn al-Ḥusain ibn 'Alī ibn Abī Tālib, known as "the Veracious" [*aṣ-Ṣādiq*], was the sixth of the twelve descendants of the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) who, according to the majority of the Shī'a, are considered the rightful Imāms. He was celebrated for his expert knowledge of Tradition, and came to be regarded as a master of the esoteric sciences.

<sup>219</sup> The following version of this story is told in the Forty-ninth Discourse of *The Sublime Revelation* [*al-Faṭḥ ar-Rabbānī*]. (See p. 307 of the translation published by Al-Baz):

It is related concerning 'Abdullāh ibn al-Mubārak (may the mercy of Allāh the Exalted be upon him) that a beggar came to him one day, asking him for some food. He had nothing in store except for ten eggs, so he ordered his maidservant to give them to the beggar, but she gave him nine and hid one away. At the moment of the sun's setting, a man came and knocked at the door, saying: "Take this basket from me!" So 'Abdullāh (may Allāh the Exalted be well pleased with him) went out to meet him and took the basket from him. Then he saw that it contained eggs, so he counted them and, lo and behold, there were ninety of them! He asked his maidservant: "Where is the other egg? How many did you give to the beggar?" She replied: "I gave him nine and left one for us to eat for breakfast." So he told her: "You have made us lose ten!"

O miserable wretch, when a poor beggar approaches you to ask you for a loan, you must lend him something, and not say: "What are you going to give me?" You must go against your selfish instinct. Start by making him a loan, then tell him later that he can keep it as a gift. Some beggars are not very good at asking for something as an outright gift. They would much prefer to apply for a loan, with every intention of paying it back. They would rather trust in Allāh and borrow on His account. If you are approached by someone like this, who can only couch his request in terms of borrowing, you should agree to call it a loan. Do not oblige him to face the fact that you are actually giving him a gift, for that would only make him feel more awkward than he feels already. Later on, when he applies to you for an extension, you should relieve him of the burden, ask him to accept that you are waiving the debt, and absolve him of any further obligation. By handling the matter like this, you will obtain the spiritual reward for the original loan you made him, and for the second loan as well. As the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) has told us:

Allāh's gift to His servant is the beggar at his door.<sup>220</sup>

Woe unto you! How can the poor beggar be anything but the gift of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), when he is taking part of your worldly wealth and investing it in your account in the hereafter, where you will find it when you really need it? The sum of money that you are giving him now will soon vanish and disappear, while you will be promoted by several degrees in the sight of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He).

Woe unto you, O servants [of Allāh]! Have you no sense of shame? You are worshipping your Lord so that He will grant you the Garden of Paradise, so that He will grant you the heavenly maidens [*ḥūr*] and young attendants. The Garden of Paradise is the Abode [*dār*], but where is the Neighbor [*jār*]? Someone who seeks the countenance of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) is different from one who seeks the Garden of Paradise, different from one who seeks the things of this world, and different from one who seeks the universe of creation. How few are they who seek the vision of the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He) and His nearness! The vision of the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He) is the prospect that delights of the eyes of those who really know Him and love Him [*al-ʿārifīn al-muḥibbīn*]. The prospect that

<sup>220</sup> *badiyyatu ʿllāhi ilā ʿabdibi ʿs-sāʿilu ʿalā bābīb.*

appeals to pious abstainers [*zāhidīn*], on the other hand, is the vision of the Garden of Paradise, dwelling with the heavenly maidens therein, and enjoying the food and drink it has to offer. What a vast difference there is between them!

O you who wish for the things of this world! Your time has been wasted on what amounts to nothing at all. O you who wish for the Garden of Paradise, the heavenly maidens and the young attendants! You have wished for something other than your Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He), and your preference has been for something other than Him. If you had any goodness in you, you would not feel happy if you were absent from Him for a single instant. Woe unto you! You do not realize what you are missing. Alas for you! The sheer delight of a glimpse at the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He) is worth far more than all the joys of the Garden of Paradise put together—more than all its heavenly maidens and youthful attendants, all its sensual pleasures and satisfactions, and all its blissful abundance. How then can any case be made in favor of the delight provided by the sights and moments of this world, the abode of trials and tribulations? It offers opportunities for indulging the appetite of the belly, the urge to fornicate, and the inclination to break fast during the daylight hours. It allows for the pursuit of passion, for the consumption of whatever it may take to satisfy the desires and lusts of the flesh, and for basking in the company of those wicked companions who are devils in human shape. In other words, it would seem that its object is to ignite a blaze of lust in the firewood of the lower self [*nafs*].

O Allāh, give us strength to fight the battles we must wage against our own lower selves. Sustain us and guide us aright, for the benefit of all mankind. Enlighten our hearts, and let us serve as a light that shines as a beacon for all mankind. Let us drink from the cup of Your intimate friendship [*uns*], so that we may quench our own thirst, and so that anyone else who is thirsty may quench his thirst through us. Bless us with gifts and with contentment. Inspire us with a sense of gratitude when we experience the receipt of gifts, and of contentment when we experience the withholding thereof and the closing of doors. Confirm us when we speak the truth, and wipe away our lying and our falsehood. Āmīn.



## The Thirty-second Discourse <sup>221</sup>

**A**s for those devout worshippers [*muttaqūn*] who observe their duty to Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) in both their public and their private lives, and who are vigilantly aware of Him under all circumstances, the sinews [*farā'is*]<sup>222</sup> of their hearts are quaking and trembling from fear of Him by night and by day. They are afraid of the trials and tribulations they may have to face, dreading the prospect of calamitous misfortunes that might cut them off from Him, and leave them so lacking in discernment that they could even topple into unbelief [*kufīr*]. They are afraid that the Angel of Death (peace be upon him) may arrive at a moment when they are acting badly.

They give that which they give with hearts afraid. (23:60)<sup>223</sup>

Their hearts are fearful of rejection, fearful because of the foreknowledge [*ilm*] that Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) has about them.

<sup>221</sup> The passages printed in ordinary (non-bold) Jilani font are also to be found in the Sixty-second Discourse of Shaikh 'Abd al-Qādir's work *The Sublime Revelation [al-Fath ar-Rabbānī]*. (See p. 485 of the translation published by Al-Baz.)

<sup>222</sup> The Arabic lexicographers give the following definitions of the meaning of the word *farīsa* (of which *farā'is* is the plural form): The portion of flesh or muscle between the side and the shoulder-blade which incessantly trembles, or quakes, in a beast. The portion of flesh which is in the part extending from the *marji'* [lower part, next to the armpit] of the shoulder-blade to the arm, on either side, and which trembles or quakes when the man, or beast, is frightened. The portion of flesh which is by the cartilage [*naghd*] of the shoulder-blade, or the part of it where it moves to and fro, in the middle of the side, by the place where the heart beats. A small piece of flesh which is in the heart, and which trembles or quakes, by reason of a calamity, when one is frightened. (See E.W. Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, art. F–R–S.)

<sup>223</sup> *yū'tūna mā ātaw wa qulūbubum wajilatun.*

<sup>224</sup> Abū 'Alī ibn al-Fuḍail ibn 'Iyāḍ at-Tālaqānī died in A.H. 187/803 C.E. in Mecca. Born in Khurāsān, he is said to have been a highwayman at the beginning of his career. After his conversion he went to Kūfa, where he studied under Sufyān ath-Thawrī and achieved considerable repute as an authority on the Traditions of the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace). He is famous for his bold preaching before the Caliph Hārūn ar-Rashid, who called him "the Prince of the Muslims." It is said that when he died sorrow disappeared from the world.

Al-Fuḍail ibn 'Iyāḍ<sup>224</sup> (may the mercy of Allāh be upon him) would say to Sufyān ath-Thawrī<sup>225</sup> whenever he met him: "Come, let us weep over the foreknowledge [*'ilm*] that Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) has about us!" What an excellent saying this is. These are the words of one who has real experience [*'ārif*] of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), one who has knowledge [*'ālim*] of Him and His ways of operating [*taṣārīf*]. What is the foreknowledge of Allāh to which he referred? The reference is to His words:

These are bound for the Garden [of Paradise] and I do not care, and these are bound for the Fire [of Hell] and I do not care.

Having mingled the whole of this together as a single statement, he was left wondering which of the two parties he might belong to. The people [of the Lord] are not dazzled by the appearance of their deeds, because deeds are valued according to the seals that are ultimately fixed upon them.

The truly devout [*muttaqūn*] are those who abstain from acts of sinful disobedience and from the pleasures of the flesh, not only the obvious kinds, but also those that may be concealed, as well as from pretense [*riyā'*] and hypocrisy [*nifāq*], from acting to please their fellow creatures and in order to achieve their selfish goals. Today [already in this world] they are in a garden, and tomorrow [in the hereafter] they will be in the midst of gardens and fountains, dwelling among trees that can never wither, fruits that can never be exhausted, and streams that can never run dry. How could those streams run dry, when their water springs from beneath the Heavenly Throne [*al-'Arsh*]?

For each and every one of these people there will be a river of water, a river of milk, a river of honey, and a river of wine. These rivers will flow along beside them wherever they may go, without needing a cleft in the ground. Everything that they enjoy in this lower world has its similar counterpart in the hereafter, and more besides. Everything that they enjoy in this lower world is a but a sample [*unmūdhaj*] of the blessings they will receive from their Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He) in the hereafter, blessings the like of which no eye has ever seen, no ear has ever heard, and no human heart has ever conceived. They will always be readily available. As soon as a person reclines on his couch, the fruits will come right up to his mouth, so that he can savor them while taking his

<sup>224</sup> See n. <sup>224</sup> on p. 188 above.

<sup>225</sup> See n. <sup>150</sup> on p. 128 above.

rest. The stems of the trees are of silver, down to beneath their roots, while their branches are of gold. The moment anyone so much as fancies the idea of tasting something from them, the fruit will come straight to his mouth, allow him to eat whatever he wishes, then go back to its place on the tree. The *raison d'être* of everything in the Garden of Paradise is to supply the needs of the inhabitants of the Garden, while they are kept in a state of pure serenity by their own speech, the sound of which is very beautiful. This applies to its rivers, its trees, and everything else that is contained within it.

O seekers! This world is transitory, and it is nothing but trouble even while it lasts. You must seek the permanent Garden, the one which is the abode of comfort and bliss [*dār rāḥa wa ni' ma*], the abode of thankfulness [*dār shukr*], in which there is no ritual ablution [*wuḍū'*] to be performed, no ritual prayer [*ṣalāt*], no pilgrimage [*ḥajj*], no alms-due [*zakāt*], no afflictions to be endured with patience, no sicknesses, no diseases, no poverty, and no fear of ever having to leave.

O my people! Death will very soon be arriving to snatch you away, so you will come to be as if you had never been created and made visible. You must turn your hearts away from your families, your children and your material possessions. You must become detached from all the creatures of your Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He). You must not rely on any single one of them, neither in trivial matters nor in matters of great importance.

O Allāh, grant us the blessing of absolute trust [*tawakkul*] in You, under all circumstances, for reliance on anyone other than You can only lead to failure, and:

Give us in this world good, and good in the hereafter, and guard us against the torment of the fire! (2:201)<sup>226</sup>



<sup>226</sup> *ātīnā fi 'd-dunyā ḥasanatan wa fi 'l-ākhirati ḥasanatan wa qinā 'adbāba 'n-nār.*

## The Thirty-third Discourse <sup>227</sup>

**D**o not try to run away from trials and tribulations, but endure them with patience. They cannot be avoided, and there is nothing for it but to endure them with patience. How can you expect the whole of this world, and all that has been created therein, to undergo change and transformation just to suit your convenience? The Prophets [*anbiyā'*] are the best of all creatures, yet they have always had to suffer affliction, and so it is for their followers, those who tread in their footsteps as they walk along their highway, emulating their example.

Our own Prophet Muḥammad (Allāh bless him and give him peace) was the beloved of the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He), yet he was constantly afflicted with poverty and need, with hunger, with fighting and wars, and with the injuries and insults of his fellow creatures, until the day he died.

Jesus (peace be upon him) is the Spirit of Allāh [*Rūḥu'llāh*] and His Word [*Kalima*], who was created by Him without a male parent. He used to heal the blind and the lepers, and he would bring the dead back to life, for he was someone whose prayers were always answered. A certain group of people were nevertheless enabled to persecute him. They reviled him, accused his mother of unchastity, and beat him. He eventually fled to escape them, he and the Disciples [*Ḥawāriyyūn*],<sup>228</sup> but

<sup>227</sup> The passages printed in ordinary (non-bold) Jilani font are also to be found—with only minor differences almost entirely explicable as due to mistakes by the copyist of *Jalā' al-Khawāṭir*—in the Sixty-second Discourse of Shaikh 'Abd al-Qādir's work *The Sublime Revelation [al-Faṭḥ ar-Rabbānī]*. (See pp. 485–86 of the translation published by Al-Baz.)

<sup>228</sup> The Arabic lexicographers offer several ingenious interpretations of *al-Ḥawāriyyūn/-īn*, the collective name for the Disciples of Jesus (peace be upon him), which they derive—like the Qur'ānic term for the brides of Paradise [*ḥūr 'in*!—from the Arabic root *ḥ-w-r*. Several authorities assign to the singular form *ḥawārī* the meaning: 'A person who whitens clothes by washing and beating them,' and then explain that its plural form is applied to the disciples of Jesus (peace be upon him) because their trade was to do this. Others trace the application to meanings like: 'One who is freed and cleared from every vice, fault or defect,' or 'one who has been tried time after time, and found to be free from vices, faults or defects.' (For yet other explanations, see E.W. Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, art. *Ḥ-W-R*.)



then their persecutors tracked them down, seized them, and subjected them to beatings and torture. They were planning to crucify Jesus (peace be upon him), so Allāh (Exalted is He) rescued him from them, and caused the person who had betrayed him to be crucified instead.

Moses (peace be upon him) was likewise afflicted with those terrifying experiences he had to suffer, and every single one of the Prophets (peace be upon them all) had his own peculiar trial and tribulation to bear.

This is His way of dealing with the Prophets [*anbiyā'*] and Messengers [*rusul*] (peace be upon them all), so who are you to wish for a different kind of treatment from Him (Almighty and Glorious is He) while you are here in this world? You must abstain from exercising your self-will [*irāda*] and your personal preference [*ikhtiṣār*]. You must abstain from conversing with your fellow creatures and from intimate friendship [*uns*] with them. Then, once you have achieved this completely, the conversation of your heart will be with your Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He) and your intimate friendship will be with Him. The remembrance [*dhikr*] of Him will be stamped on your heart. You will come to be one who remembers Him, while He is remembering you. You will concentrate your heart [*qalb*] on Him, together with your intellectual faculty [*fi'ād*],<sup>229</sup> uniting them both in His presence.

As far as the seeker is concerned, all that is apart from Him becomes nonexistent. Then, when he has come to be one of those spiritual beings [*rūḥāniyyūn*] who have attained to their goal, he will go forth among the servants [of Allāh] and the cities where they live [*fi'l-ibād wa'l-bilād*]. Because of him, the people will enjoy protection from disasters and misfortunes, for he will take with him what he has received from his Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He). This is the genuine gift [*al-aṭā' al-ḥaqīqī*], while everything else is merely a figure of speech [*majāz*].

Do not tell anyone what you are up to in the affairs of this world and the affairs of the hereafter. Treat what you are involved in as a safe deposit, and keep it under lock and key. Cover the face of your state of

<sup>229</sup> The term *fi'ād* is often regarded as a synonym of *qalb*, and therefore translated as "heart". In this instance, however, Shaikh 'Abd al-Qādir (may Allāh be well pleased with him) is clearly drawing a distinction. As 'Abdullāh Yūsuf 'Alī points out, in footnote 5091 to his translation of the Qur'ān, where he comments on: "The heart [*fi'ād*] in no way falsified what he saw" (53:11): "Heart" in Arabic includes the faculty of intelligence as well as the faculty of feeling."

being, and let no one catch sight of it apart from Allāh. And if the veil [*niqāb*] you choose to wear is a full-length covering [*burqu'*],<sup>230</sup> that will be even better for you.

This is the end of the age. These are the days of the intermission [*fatra*]. The market of hypocrisy [*sūq an-nifāq*] is open for business, the market where dealings are based on hoping for the best while dreading the worst [*ar-raghba wa 'r-rahba*]. You are greedily hoping to get what this world has to offer, while dreading that it may keep its distance from you. You are eagerly hoping for closeness to your fellow creatures, while dreading their remoteness. Worldly kings have come to be gods [*āliha*] for many people. This world, riches, good health, power and abilities have all become gods. Woe unto you! You have mistaken the branch for a root, the recipient of nourishment for a provider, the possession for an owner, the poor beggar for someone who is rich, the weakling for someone who is strong, the corpse for a living being. You are quite unworthy of respect, and we shall neither follow you nor accept your doctrine [*madhhab*]. Far from it! We shall keep well away from you, on the hill of safety [*salāma*], on the hill of the Sunna and the renunciation of heretical innovations [*bida'*], on the hill of the affirmation of Divine Unity [*tawhīd*], of sincerity [*ikhlās*], of the renunciation of pretense and hypocrisy, of regarding creatures as essentially powerless, weak and subject to coercion. **We are content to accept the divine decree [*qadā'*]. We shall forsake dissatisfaction and persist in patient endurance. We shall give up complaining and walk with the feet of our hearts toward the door of our King (Almighty and Glorious is He).**

The power to exercise control and authority comes from Him alone, just as the power to create and provide sustenance comes from Him alone. When you glorify the tyrants [*jabābira*] of this world, its Pharaohs, its kings and its men of wealth, and when you forget Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) and do not glorify Him, then the verdict [*ḥukm*] on you will be the verdict that applies to those who worship idols [*aṣnām*]. You cause what you glorify to become your idol. Woe unto you! You must worship

<sup>230</sup> The *burqu'*, as described by E.W. Lane, is "a long strip of cotton or other cloth, black, blue, or of some other color, or white, concealing the whole of the face of the woman wearing it, except the eyes, and reaching nearly to the feet, suspended at the top by a narrow band, or other fastening, which passes up the middle of the forehead, and which is sewed, as are the two upper corners, to a band which is tied round the head, beneath the head-veil." (See: E.W. Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, art. B-R-Q-')

the Creator of the idols, then the idols will appear contemptible to you. Draw near to Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), then creatures will draw near to you. In proportion to your reverence for Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), His creatures will revere you. In proportion to your love for Him, His creatures will love you. In proportion to your fear of Him, His creatures will be afraid of you. In proportion to your respect for His commandments and His prohibitions, His creatures will treat you with respect. In proportion to your proximity to Him, His creatures will move close to you. In proportion to your service to Him, His creatures will serve you.

**You must make a practice of pious restraint [*ward'*]. Do not let it slip through the fingers of your heart. If you fail to practice it, you are bringing disappointment upon yourself. When a person fails to practice pious restraint, his heart becomes darkly stained by things of dubious legality [*shubuhāt*] and influences that cause confusion [*takhlīṭāt*]. Woe unto you! You claim to be truly devout [*muttaqī*], yet you fail to practice pious restraint. A cautious person [*wari'*] will abstain from many things for fear of stumbling into that which is unlawful [*ḥarām*] or dubious [*shubha*], and thereby incurring the punishment of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He).**

You must avail yourself as little as possible of the special concessions [*tarakhkhuṣ*] allowed by the sacred law. I happened one day to be passing through a village that was surrounded by fields of corn, so I stretched out my hand and plucked an ear of corn to nibble. As soon as I had done this, I was approached by two men from that same village, each of them carrying a stick. They beat me so hard that I fell to the ground. At that very moment, I made a solemn pledge to Allāh (Exalted is He), vowing that I would never again avail myself of special concessions, even in cases where they are clearly allowed. This was one such case, because the sacred law [*shar'*] has granted permission for anyone who is in need of cereals [in the field] or fruit [on the tree] to eat as much of them as will satisfy his need, without being required to make any payment in return. This is a general dispensation [*rukḥṣa*], but I was not allowed to avail myself of this license. I was obliged to apply the strict injunction [*'azīma*], the meticulous observance of pious restraint.

The more one remembers death, the greater his pious caution grows, the less he can avail himself of special concessions, and the more he is

**subject to the strictest application of the sacred law.** Remembering death is a remedy for the diseases of the lower selves [*nufūs*] and it is a trainer's staff [*miqma'a*] over their heads. I have spent many years practicing the frequent remembrance of death, by night and by day. I have prospered through my remembrance of it, and I have brought my lower self [*nafs*] under control through practicing that remembrance. There have been certain nights when I would remember death and would weep from the beginning of the night right through to the early morning [*saḥar*]. During one such a night I was weeping as I said: "My God [*Ilāhī*], I beg You not to let the Angel of Death [*malak al-mawt*] take my spirit [*rūḥ*] away, but to deal with its removal Yourself." Then, although my eyes were closed, I saw an old man with handsome features. As he came in through the door, I said to him, "Who are you?" and he replied, "I am the Angel of Death." So I said to him, "But I have asked Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) to take charge of the removal of my spirit Himself, instead of letting you remove it." Then he said, "Why did you ask Him for that? What sin am I guilty of? I am just a servant under orders. I am commanded to go gently with some folk and to handle some folk roughly." He gave me a hug and wept, and I wept with him. Then I woke up and found myself shedding tears.

**You must refrain from idle fantasy. This business is not accomplished by passive resignation and the wagging of the tongue. As long as you are sitting here at this table where food and drink are served, you must eat and drink, and offer food and drink to others. In case you have heard something merely by hearsay, you must not pass on anything you have not actually seen for yourself. Do not invite people to attend a party that is not your own. Do not invite people to an empty house, so that they treat you as a laughingstock. Shoot us an arrow from your own quiver. Treat us to something that comes from your own earnings, from the sweat of your own brow. Do not give us any part of what you have stolen from your neighbors. Do not offer us clothes from your borrowed wardrobe. Gifts are acceptable only if they come from the owner, not from a hired hand or someone guilty of misappropriation.**

The affirmation of Divine Unity [*tawḥīd*] is a scorching fire.

O fire, be coolness and peace for Abraham. (21:69)<sup>231</sup>

O Allāh, grant us the good of this day, and protect us from the evil of it, and may the same apply to all our nights and days. Āmīn.

<sup>231</sup> *yā nāru kūnī bardan wa salāman 'alā Ibrāhīm.*

## The Thirty-fourth Discourse

**O** you who are all so attached to your interests in this world and to those long-term expectations of yours! The appointed moments of death [*ājāl*] will very soon be upon you. They will intervene between you and the fulfillment of those expectations, so you had better act now, without delay, if you wish to forestall the advent of those final moments. You should be prepared for death to show its face quite suddenly. Illness is not a necessary precondition of death.

Iblis is your enemy, so you must pay no attention to any advice he may offer. Do not place your trust in him, for he is not someone who is worthy of trust [*amīn*]. You must always be on your guard against him. He wants to see you die in a state of heedlessness, of sinful disobedience and unbelief [*kufṛ*]. Do not be unmindful of your enemy, for he does not hesitate to wield his sword against anyone, from a champion of the truth [*ṣiddīq*] to an atheistic heretic [*zindīq*]. Only a few rare individuals escape his onslaught. He caused your father Adam (peace be upon him) and your mother Eve to be expelled from the Garden of Paradise, and he is fully committed to the task of ensuring that you will never be allowed to enter therein. He is always prompting you to acts of disobedience, sinful errors, unbelief and rebellion. All sins, in fact, are attributable to him, after the decree of Allāh (Exalted is He) and His predestination [*qadar*].

All creatures are subject to being tried and tested, apart from those servants of Allāh who are sincerely devoted to His service [*al-mukhlīṣīn li-ʿibādatih*], for over them Iblis has no dominion. In some cases, however, he may cause even the likes of these to suffer pain. When this is required by the decree of destiny, a blind eye is turned and he is allowed to have dealings with them, although his actions affect the physical body, not the heart and not the innermost being [*sirr*], in matters pertaining to

this world, not in matters pertaining to the hereafter, and only in relation to other creatures [*khalq*], not in relation to the Creator [*Khāliq*] (Almighty and Glorious is He).

It is most often by way of worldly interests and the lower self [*nafs*] that Iblīs gains access to creatures. The pursuit of this world is a blazing fire. You must concentrate on that which really contributes to your welfare, and which makes you fit to work for what comes after death. Efforts to control your lower selves will contribute to your welfare. Attending to your own faults will contribute to your welfare, but attending to the faults of other people will not contribute to your welfare. You must remember death, and work for what comes after death. As the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) has said:

The shrewd person is one who keeps his lower self under control [*al-kayyisu man dāna nafṣahu*] and works for that which shall be after death, while the incompetent person is one who follows his lower self and its whims, yet wishes for forgiveness from Allāh.

You must train your lower selves to behave with modest humility toward Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) and toward the true believers [*mu' minīn*] among His creatures. You must insist that they pay the dues they owe to Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He). You must subject them to critical examination and call them to account, in accordance with the practice of the righteous [*ṣāliḥūn*]. Consider the example set by 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (may Allāh the Exalted be well pleased with him): When the night grew dark around him, he would direct his attention toward his lower self, saying to it: "What have you done for your Lord Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He)? What have you accomplished for His sake?" Then he would pick up a kind of whip [*dirra*]<sup>232</sup> and use it to administer self-flagellation as a humiliating chastisement before he went about his business. He always exacted respect for the rights of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), but he also demanded more from his lower self in the way of service to Him, for he is numbered among the great ones, the champions of truth [*ṣiddīqūn*], the righteous [*ṣāliḥūn*], those drawn near to their Lord [*muqarrabūn*],

<sup>232</sup> The *dirra* is vaguely defined by the Arabic lexicographers as 'a certain thing with which one beats or flogs.' According to E.W. Lane, who could not find any Arab who could describe it in his day (first half of the 19th century), "it seems to have been a kind of whip, or scourge, of twisted cords or thongs, used for punishment and in sport." (See: E.W. Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, art. D-R-R.)

the transmitters of the Prophetic tradition [*muḥaddithūn*], those who have been assured that the Garden of Paradise awaits them.

The righteous [*ṣāliḥūn*] are distinguished by the fact that they call their own lower selves to account [*yuhāsibūna nufūsahum*], as well as by their righteous conduct [*ṣalāḥ*] and their worshipful obedience [*tāʿa*]. As for you, since you exact no such reckoning from your lower selves, you can hardly expect to derive any benefit from them.

O Allāh, protect us from our own lower selves, from our passionate desires and our devils! Include us in Your company [*ḥizb*], and exclude us from Your sudden affliction [*ḥazb*]! Bring our hearts close to You before death, and grant us the special meeting [with You] before the general meeting [at the Resurrection]! Āmīn.



## The Thirty-fifth Discourse

**L**uqmān the Wise (may Allāh the Exalted bestow His mercy upon him) would often say to his son: “O my dear son, how can a person feel safe from the Fire of Hell, when he must inevitably pass through it? How can a person feel secure in this world, when he must inevitably move on beyond it? How can one forget about death, when there is no escape from it? How can one ignore it and pay no attention to it?”

All of you will have to pass through the Fire of Hell. This means that you need to equip yourselves for the journey with a good supply of righteous devotion [*taqwā*], but I do not see you stocking up on righteous devotion!

O seekers of this world! O you who are so passionately in love with it! Is it anything more than a sip in comparison with the Garden of Paradise? There is the secret [you should really be looking for]! There is the lady [you should really be in love with]! There is the true priority!<sup>233</sup>

Imām Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal (may Allāh the Exalted bestow His mercy upon him) used to say: “How precious to me are hearts that have been devastated by the love of this world, and yet they have succeeded in compiling the Qur’ān!”<sup>234</sup>

<sup>233</sup> *biya’s-sirr—biya’s-sitt—biya’l-aṣl.*

<sup>234</sup> A more complete and more comprehensible version of this saying has been recorded in the Sixty-second Discourse of *The Sublime Revelation [al-Faṭḥ ar-Rabbānī]* (pp. 486–87 of the Al-Baz edition), where Shaikh ‘Abd al-Qādir (may Allāh be well pleased with him) says:

Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal (may the mercy of Allāh the Exalted be upon him) used to say: “Dear to me are hearts that have been scorched by the love of this world, and yet their breasts have compiled more of the Qur’ān than righteous brethren who stand and bow and prostrate themselves [in prayer], and who command what is right and fair [*ma’rif*] and forbid what is wrong and unfair. [They are dear to me because] these are the ones whose pious caution [*wara’*] has restrained their hands from worldly acquisition, and whose aspiration [*himma*] has been the quest for their Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He). Spend your money on them, for they will have an empire [*dawla*] tomorrow in the presence of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He).”



The Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) is reported as having said:

These hearts are getting very rusty, and the polish they need is the recitation of the Qur'ān and attendance at sessions of remembrance [*dhikr*].<sup>235</sup>

By attending the sessions [*majālis*] of learned scholars who apply their knowledge in actual practice [*al-'ulamā' al-'ummāl bi'l-'ilm*] it is possible for hearts to be polished, purified and cleaned, and for their hardness to be dispelled.

A man once complained to al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī<sup>236</sup> (may Allāh bestow His mercy upon him), lamenting the hardness of his own heart. So al-Ḥasan told him: "You must make a constant practice of the remembrance [of Allāh]." Those who remember Allāh, who practice what He requires of them, and who become His friends [*awliyā'*], they are kings in the realm of reality [*ḥaqīqa*]. The King Almighty is He, so they strive to serve Him, in order that they may become kings in the hereafter. This world is of little importance in their hearts. They have seen the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He), so creatures appear quite insignificant in their eyes. The highest honor [*'izza*] consists in obedience to Allāh and the forsaking of sins.

This heart will not be whole and sound until it abandons every object of love [*mahbūb*], cuts off every object of attachment [*mawṣūl*], and abstains from every product of creation [*makhlūq*]. Renounce all these, for then you will be given something far better than anything you have renounced. To quote the words of the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace):

When someone renounces things, He compensates him for his loss with something that is better by far.

O Allāh, awaken our hearts and arouse them from heedless neglect of You, and:

Give us in this world good, and good in the hereafter, and guard us against the torment of the fire! (2:201)<sup>237</sup>

<sup>235</sup> In the fuller version of this *ḥadīth*, as it is recorded in the Twenty-third Discourse of *The Sublime Revelation [al-Faṭḥ ar-Rabbānī]* (p. 165 of the Al-Baz edition), the words attributed to the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) are as follows:

These hearts are getting very rusty, and the polish they need is the recitation of the Qur'ān, the remembrance of death, and attendance at sessions of remembrance [*dhikr*].

<sup>236</sup> See n.<sup>114</sup> on p. 95 above.

<sup>237</sup> *ātina fi 'd-dunyā ḥasanatan wa fi 'l-ākhirati ḥasanatan wa qina 'adbāba 'n-nār.*

## The Thirty-sixth Discourse

When a person is genuinely sincere [*ṣādiq*], he is grateful for the blessings [*ni‘am*] he has received, and he patiently endures the misfortunes [*niqam*] he must bear. He carries out the commandments and observes the prohibitions [of the sacred law].

Our hearts are involved in a process of development. To be grateful for blessings is to cause those blessings to increase, and to endure misfortunes with patience is to make it easier for them to accomplish their purpose.

You must endure with patience the death of children and other relatives, the departure of wealth, the loss a good reputation, the failure to achieve desired goals, and the damage done by fellow creatures. You will experience many good things, if you always respond with gratitude when easy circumstances come your way, and with patience to the advent of hard times. Ease [*yusr*] and hardship [*‘usr*] are the feathers that give strength to the wings of your faith [*īmān*], so that your heart and your innermost being [*sirr*] can use them to fly to the door of your Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He).

How can you lay claim to faith, when you have no patience [*ṣabr*] at all? Surely you must have heard the saying of the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace):

Patience is to faith as the head is to the body.<sup>238</sup>

Since you have no patience, your faith has no head, and this must mean that its body is of no consequence!

If you really knew the One who puts us to the test [*al-Mubtalī*], you would comprehend the true significance of His trials and tribulations [*balā’*]. If you really knew this world for what it is, you would reconsider the pursuit of it.

<sup>238</sup> *aṣ-ṣabru mina ‘l-īmāni ka ‘r-ra’si mina ‘l-jasad.*

O Allāh, guide every errant wanderer back to the right path, bring every disobedient sinner back to Your good grace, enable every suffering soul to bear his suffering with patience, and help everyone who enjoys well-being to be truly thankful for it. Āmīn.



## The Thirty-seventh Discourse<sup>239</sup>

Someone asked him: “Which is more intense, the fire of fear or the fire of yearning [*shawq*]?” To this he replied: “The fire of fear in the case of the seeker [*murīd*], and the fire of yearning in the case of the sought [*murād*]. The former is one thing, and the latter is something else. Which of the two fires do you experience, O questioner?”

O you who rely on material means [*asbāb*], your Benefactor [*Nāfiʿ*] is One, and One is He who causes you harm [*Dār*]. Your King is One, your Sultan is One, and your God [*Ilāh*] is One. **He is the One who made you, and whatever you make is made through your hands by His handiwork. He has created you, sustained you, caused you to suffer harm, caused you to enjoy benefits, and guided you aright. How can you rely on anything that is merely a product of creation, like yourselves?** You must surely have heard Him say:

Whoever hopes to meet his Lord, let him do righteous work, and make none sharer in the worship due unto his Lord. (18:110)<sup>240</sup>

O hypocrite [*munāfiq*], your time is slipping away into nothingness. O backslider, your time is being wasted and your capital is being frittered away. You will surely reap no profits from it. Your capital is your religion [*dīn*], and you should be consuming the things of this world, but you are consuming your religion, so it is being used up and melting away. It is being used up through your misconduct, through your pursuit of fame, the *dīnār* and the *dirham* [gold and silver coins], social status and acceptance. You are the enemy of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), a despicable abomination, loathed by the hearts of the righteous [*ṣāliḥīn*] and the champions of the truth [*ṣiddīqīn*] among His servants, and

<sup>239</sup> The passages printed in ordinary (non-bold) Jilani font are also to be found near the end of the Sixty-second Discourse of Shaikh ‘Abd al-Qādir’s work *The Sublime Revelation* [*al-Faṭḥ ar-Rabbānī*] (see p. 487 of the translation published by Al-Baz.)

<sup>240</sup> *fa-man kāna yarjū liqāʾa Rabbibi faʾl-yaʾmalʾ amalan ṣāliḥan wa lā yusbrīk bi-ʾibādati Rabbibi aḥadā.*

loathed by His angels [*malā' ika*]. The angels are cursing you. The earth beneath your feet is cursing you. The sky above your head is cursing you. The very clothes on your back are cursing you. For you are accursed in the sight of the Creator [*Khāliq*] and His creatures [*khalq*] alike. You must surely be aware that Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) has told us:

Surely the hypocrites will be in the lowest depth of the Fire [of Hell].  
(4:145)<sup>241</sup>

You must submit [*aslim*], then repent. You must make amends before death suddenly overtakes you, before it catches you unawares, for then you will feel sorry, but feeling sorry will do you no good at all.

I know you very well. I cannot expose you publicly, of course, since we are instructed in the law [*hukm*] to respect your privacy and that of others like you. Nevertheless, I shall not hesitate to speak out, even if I must stop short of actually naming names. I shall draw attention to you by hinting indirectly, without being totally explicit. My remarks will be aimed at you, so you had better listen carefully to what I have to say. O you tyrants! The slave may need to be beaten with a stick, but a nod should be enough for a free man.

The Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He) surveys the public behavior of His creatures and their private conduct, and He looks into their hearts. He accepts from them only that which is worthy of Him, and that which is done for the sake of His countenance. Do not bother to cultivate behavior that is artificial, counterfeit and fraudulent:

For He knows the secret and that which is more hidden still. (20:7)  
He knows the deception of the eyes and that which the breasts conceal.  
(40:19)<sup>242</sup>

You must serve this All-Providing King [*al-Malik ar-Rāziq*], this Benefactor [*Mun'im*], the One who has given you this sun as a source of radiance, the moon as a source of light, and the night as time of peace and quiet. He has invited you to be aware of bountiful blessings, and has recorded their number, so that you may offer thanks for them. Then He has told you, after recording their number:

If you try to reckon the bounty of Allāh, you will never count it. (14:34 and 16:18)<sup>243</sup>

<sup>241</sup> *inna 'l-munāfiqīna fī 'd-darki 'l-asfali mina 'n-nār.*

<sup>242</sup> *fa-innahu ya'lamu 's-sirra wa akhfā—ya'lamu kbā'inata 'l-ayuni wa mā tukhfī 'š-šudūr.*

<sup>243</sup> *wa in ta'uddū ni'mata 'llābi lā tuḥṣūbā.*

In actual fact, if anyone could recognize all the bountiful blessings of Allāh, he would be so overawed by them that he would find it quite impossible to express his gratitude. This is why Moses (peace be upon him) once said: “O Allāh, I thank You through my inability to thank You!” How paltry is your gratitude, and how frequent are your complaints! If only you knew Him really well, you would guard your tongues in His presence. You would train your hearts and your physical bodies to be on their best behavior under all circumstances. This is why the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) has told us:

When someone really knows Allāh, his tongue becomes weary.<sup>244</sup>

Someone who really knows [*al-‘ārif*] will always act as if he were dumb. He will never say a word about the secrets to which he has access, except with His permission.

You must commit your own lower self [*nafs*], the limbs and organs of your physical body, your family and your property, to the care and safekeeping of the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He). You must not squander the secret knowledge to which He grants you access, for in His presence you will discover all that is good. You must pay due respect to the law [*ḥukm*]. You must act in a manner pleasing to the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) and follow in his footsteps. Then you may enter into the presence of your Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He), standing on the feet of your knowledge [*‘ilm*] and your intimate awareness [*ma‘rifa*] of Him. You must stay in the company of the law until you arrive at the door. Once you have arrived, make sure that you have satisfied all its requirements, and ask it to invoke the blessing of peace and prosperity as a farewell greeting. Then you may enter the abode of your innermost being [*sirr*] and your spiritual content [*ma‘nā*].

A certain righteous man is reported as having said: “If playing the fife and drum is what it takes to make a living in this world, that suits me far better than having to sell my religion.”

The time is very near at hand, when each and every one of you will have to reflect on what he is striving to achieve, in terms of affirming the

<sup>244</sup> *man ‘arafa ‘llāha kalla lisānub.*

Divine Unity [*tawḥīd*] or associating partners with Allāh [*shirk*], in terms of hypocrisy [*nifāq*] or sincerity [*ikhlās*]. When that day comes, the Fire of Hell [*Jahīm*] will be clearly visible to those with eyes to see. All who are present at the Resurrection [*Qiyāma*] will see it and be terrified by it, except a few special individuals. As soon as it recognizes the true believer [*mu'min*], the Fire will abate and subside, so that he may pass safely through. This, according to the traditional report, is why the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) has told us:

On the Day of Resurrection, the Fire of Hell will say to the believer: "Pass through, O believer! Your light has extinguished my flame!"

It will call out to him before he passes through it, crying: "Move quickly! Pass on through! You need not hold back for fear of my passionate embrace, since my ardent love affair is not with you."

No one can avoid the passage through the Fire, be he Muslim or unbeliever [*kāfir*], obedient worshipper or disobedient sinner. When the believer's foot is firmly set upon the narrow bridge [*ṣirāt*] that has been stretched across the Fire of Hell, the latter will draw back from him, saying as it subsides: "Pass through, for your light has extinguished my flame!" Some will pass through without even seeing the Fire, so they will say, when they have entered the Garden of Paradise: "Surely it is true that Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) once told us:

There is not one of you but shall approach it. (19:71)<sup>245</sup>

—and yet we did not see it." So they will be told: "You did indeed pass through it, but while it was in abeyance."

The disobedient sinner has run away from his Master [*Mawlā*] (Almighty and Glorious is He), while the obedient believer stands ever at the ready in the service of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He). Even though He has known about him all along, He will ask His servant to give an account of everything in which he became involved while he was in this world. The obedient believer will then report that he refrained from following his passionate desire [*hawā*], because it was trying to lead him astray, telling him to challenge his Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He), and that he opposed and fought against his lower self [*nafs*], because he

<sup>245</sup> *wa in minkum illā wāridubā.*

realized that it was hostile to his Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He).

Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) told David (blessing and peace be upon him) by way of inspiration:

O David, flee from your passionate desire, for there is no challenger who dares to challenge Me, unless it be passionate desire.<sup>246</sup>

In the company of the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He) you must stand quietly, keep your head bowed, and observe the best of manners. You must set aside your own wish [*irāda*] in favor of His wish, your own preference [*ikhtiṣār*] in favor of His preference, your own verdict [*ḥukm*] in favor of His verdict, your own will [*mashīʾa*] in favor of His will. He is “Doer of what He will.” (11:107)<sup>247</sup>

He shall not be questioned as to what He does, but they shall be questioned. (21:23)<sup>248</sup>

To be in His company is like being in the company of savage beasts and vipers. This is why the people [of the Lord] are always in a state of fearfulness and wary caution. Their nighttime is a night of vigil, and their daytime is a day of fasting. Their diet is the diet of the sick, and their sleep is the sleep of the poor. Their speech is the speech of absolute necessity. The invalid is satisfied with next to nothing, and even when he does take something to eat he is scared of eating it, since he is always wondering whether or not it will agree with his constitution.

The drowning man must keep his eyes open, since he cannot drop off to sleep for a moment without being brought back to consciousness by the waves. They [the people of the Lord] are in the ocean of the mainland [*baḥr al-qārra*], the ocean of One who is “Doer of what He will,” not of what they might wish. They are not afraid of being drowned by the waves, nor of being overpowered and eaten by sharks. They hope that this ocean will cast them up onto the beach, and that it will send them into the palace of His nearness, there to converse with Him directly and to witness Him directly.

O you who have wishes, you must try not to wish for anything at all. Somebody once asked a certain righteous man: “What do you long for?”

<sup>246</sup> *yā Dāʾūd* ʾ**h**jur *bawāka fa-innahu lā munāziʾa yunāziʾ* unī *gbairu ʾl-bawā*.

<sup>247</sup> *Faʾālun li-mā yurīd*.

<sup>248</sup> *lā yusʾalu ʾammā yafʾalu wa hum yusʾalūn*.



That righteous man replied: “I long for all that destiny may have in store—in a state of contentment with the divine decree [*qadā'*], a state in which personal wishes have been abandoned, and the heart [*qalb*] has been taken out and placed between the hands of its Transformer [*Muqallib*].”

O Allāh, include us among those Muslims who look for help and protection between the hands of Your power [*qudra*], and:

Give us in this world good, and good in the hereafter, and guard us against the torment of the fire! (2:201)<sup>249</sup>



<sup>249</sup> *ātina fī 'd-dunyā ḥasanatan wa fī 'l-ākbarati ḥasanatan wa qinā 'adhāba 'n-nār.*

## The Thirty-eighth Discourse

The people [of the Lord] have given up the toil [*taraku 'l-ʿamal*],<sup>250</sup> saying: “Everything apart from Him is merely stuffing and a shell.” They have set out in quest of the kernel [*lubb*]. They have clung to it with persistent dedication, and have found it so completely satisfying that they can do without the shell. They are so content with Allāh that nothing else is indispensable. There is no dispensing with the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He), while everything apart from Him can be dispensed with. He has recognized the genuine sincerity [*ṣidq*] of their quest. He has granted them amnesty and well-being [*al-ʿafw wa 'l-ʿāfiya*] and nearness to Him.

Over there, protection belongs only to Allāh, the True. (18:44)<sup>251</sup>

A heart that feels no fear of Him is like a piece of land on which there are no trees, or a flock of sheep without a shepherd. That land will soon become a desert waste, and those sheep will soon be eaten by the wolves. When someone is afraid, he travels under the cover of night. He does not settle in one place, but is always traveling on toward his final destination. The journey of the people [of the Lord] is toward the palace of the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He). The traveling is the traveling of their hearts, and the arrival is the arrival of their innermost beings [*asrār*]. When the innermost beings have arrived, they become kings, while the limbs and organs of the body become steadfast attendants. When the heart arrives at the door, it will ask permission for the innermost being to be admitted inside, so the innermost being will enter and then the heart will go in after it.

How great and varied is your knowledge [*ʿulūm*], yet how few are your practical deeds [*ʿamal*]? You have turned your endowment [*ḥazz*] of

<sup>250</sup> In other words, they have given up the toil of striving to earn the rewards that belong to the realm of creation, whether in this world or in the hereafter.

<sup>251</sup> *ḥunālīka 'l-walāyatu li'llābi 'l-Ḥaqq.*

knowledge into a memory bank [*hifẓ*], while tales and stories have proliferated. How can you hope to benefit from this? Here we have someone who carefully memorizes a certain *ḥadīth* [tradition of the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace)], yet he does not put a single letter of it into practice! This will count as evidence against you [on the Day of Judgment], not as evidence in your favor.

You go around saying: “My shaikh is so-and-so. I have been a disciple of so-and-so. I have attended the lectures of so-and-so. I once said to the learned scholar so-and-so...” All of this, without any practical action, does not amount to a thing.<sup>252</sup> If a person is truly sincere [*ṣādiq*], he will put the truth into practice. He will say farewell to the shaikhs and take his leave of them, indicating to them as he goes: “Stay there in your normal surroundings, while I move on to explore those places to which you have shown me the way.” The shaikhs are a door, but it is not appropriate to cling to the door and never to enter the house.

And Allāh coins parables for mankind [in order that they may reflect].  
(14:25)<sup>253</sup>

Suppose you notice the hardness of a person’s heart, the frozen look in his eye, the far reach of his expectation, his stinginess with what he has in his possession, his disdainful attitude toward the commandments and prohibitions [of the sacred law], and his bitter expression of resentment whenever misfortunes come his way. If you should ever observe someone who matches this description, you need to be aware that he is in very serious trouble. The core of a heart so hard can never feel compassion, and his eyes will never turn moist with tears in a moment of joy or a moment of happiness, because the frozen condition of his eye is due to the hardness of his heart. How could his heart be anything but hard, when he is filled with an ardent desire to commit sins and wrongful acts, with exaggerated expectations, with a greedy longing for things that are not destined to belong to him, and with a feeling of envy toward their rightful owners? How could that heart of his be anything but hard, when he is too stingy to pay the alms-due [*zakāt*] prescribed by the sacred law

<sup>252</sup> It is interesting to note that the rest of this paragraph—up to and including the Qur’anic quotation (14:25)—is also recorded, with only slight differences in the wording, near the very end of the Sixty-second Discourse (i.e., the final Discourse) of *The Sublime Revelation [al-Faṭḥ ar-Rabbānī]*. (See p. 488 of the Al-Baz edition).

<sup>253</sup> *wa yaḍribu ‘llāhu ‘l-amthāla li’n-nāsi [la’allabum yatadbakkarūn]*.

[*mafrūda*], when he does not produce the offerings that must be made in order to obtain expiation [*kaffārāt*], when he does not fulfill his vows [*nudhūr*], when he does not attend to the needs of his close relatives, when he does not settle his debts in spite of his ability to do so, but makes his creditors wait indefinitely so that he can evade repayment altogether, and when he hates giving anything extra, even more than he hates giving that which is due? All of these characteristics, and others of similar nature, are symptomatic of serious spiritual disorder [*shaqā'*].

As Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) has said:

Is not the time now ripe for the hearts of those who believe to be humbled to the Remembrance of Allāh and to the Truth which He has sent down? (57:16)<sup>254</sup>

You must not get into arguments with Him on the subject of His decree [*qadar*]. You must make serious efforts and exert yourselves with diligence. You must stick to your commitment and continue to pursue your goal. You must offer earnest entreaties. You must weep and plead for intercession. You must humble yourselves. You must be steadfast in holding your ground by the door. You must not run away.

All matters of concern are at the disposal of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He). He is the One who alerts us and puts us on our guard. He is the One who makes us wakeful, and He is the One who lulls us to sleep. When our Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) heard the summons of the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He):

O you enveloped in your cloak, arise, and warn! (74:1,2)<sup>255</sup>

—he got up from his bed and went forth to answer the call. This is how we should always hear and respond to the summons of the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He), as we wander in search of Him and yearn to find Him. This is how Allāh (Exalted is He) awakens our hearts to the duties they must perform. When He wants you to carry out some task, He will equip you for it. This is an esoteric mystery [*sirr bāṭin*], for it concerns the decree of destiny [*qadar*], preordination [*sābiqa*] and foreknowledge [*ilm*]. It is not permissible for us to rest our case on this, and we are not allowed to use it as a pretext for inaction. Not in the least!

<sup>254</sup> *a-lam ya'ni li'lladhbina āmanū an takhsba'a qulūbuhum li-dbikri 'llāhi wa mā nazala minā 'l-Ḥaqqi.*

<sup>255</sup> *yā ayyuba 'l-muddathtbir—qum fa-andbir.*

We must make strenuous efforts and exert ourselves with diligence. We must dare to be enterprising, even though we have no guarantee.

O Allāh, let us be content with Your decree. Let us be patient in the face of Your affliction. Let us distribute our gratitude for Your blessings. We beg You to grant us the fullness of grace, the permanence of well-being, and the constancy of love.

Ibrāhīm ibn Ad'ham<sup>256</sup> (may Allāh bestow His mercy upon him) is reported as having said: "I wept one night from the first part of the night until the last part of it. All that time I was offering various prayers of supplication [*du' ā'*] to Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), and all the while I was shedding tears. But just when the dawn was almost on the point of breaking, my eyelids drooped. Then, in my sleep, I saw Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He). 'O Ibrāhīm,' said He, 'it would be better for you to offer Me your prayer of supplication in these words: "O Allāh, let me be content with Your decree. Let me be patient in the face of Your affliction. Let me distribute my gratitude for Your blessings. I beg You to grant me the fullness of grace, the permanence of well-being, and the constancy of love.'" <sup>257</sup> Then I woke up, to find myself repeating those very words!"

The servant [of the Lord] who makes his servitude a reality [*al-muḥaqqiq li'l-'ubūdiyya*] is the one who is completely satisfied with Him to the exclusion of His creatures. This servant owes his salvation from the condition of other servants to His Prophet (may Allāh bless him and his family and give them peace, and upon all the other Prophets be the blessings and peace of Allāh). He is no longer in need of anything; it is rather the case that things are in need of him. The people [of the Lord] seek nothing from Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), other than Allāh Himself. They are seeking the Benefactor [*Mun'im*], not the benefit [*ni'ma*]. They are seeking the Creator [*Khāliq*], not the product of creation [*makh'lūq*]. They have run away from food and drink and clothes, from marriage and from all the goods and chattels of this world. They have run away to Him from all of this, so how could they be serving Him for the sake of such things? How could they be seeking such things from Him?

<sup>256</sup> Abū Ishāq Ibrāhīm ibn Ad'ham ibn Maṣṣūr ibn Yazīd ibn Jābir at-Tamīmī al-'Ijlī (d. ca. A.H. 165/782 C.E.) was the Prince of Balkh who renounced his kingdom and became a wandering ascetic. His life has often been compared to that of Buddha.

<sup>257</sup> *Allāhumma ardinī bi-qaḍā'ika wa ṣabbirnī 'alā balā'ika wa awzi nī shukra nā'mā'ika—*  
*as'aluka tamāma 'n-ni'mati wa dawāma l-'āfiyati wa 'tb-tḥabāta 'ala l-maḥabba.*

They do not serve Him for the sake of obtaining fodder [*‘alaf*] to feed their lower selves [*nufūs*]. They do not serve Him for the sake of enjoying access to the mansion where guests are entertained [*dār ad-diyāfa*]. They say: “We do not feel the need for human sympathy [*rahma*]. You may wish for human sympathy, but all we want is to be alone with the Beloved [*Maḥbūb*], without regard for sympathy. There is no room for any partner [*sharīk*].”

O seeker [*murīd*], you are merely simulating love [*maḥabba*]. The lover is the guest of the beloved [*al-muḥibb ḍaif al-maḥbūb*]. Did you ever see a guest having to bestir himself in order to obtain his food and drink and his other essential needs? You are merely simulating love. You go to sleep, but the lover never sleeps. There are only two possible cases: you must be either a lover or one who is loved. If you are a lover, well, how can the lover fall asleep? But if you are a loved one, well, in that case the lover is your guest. O you who lay claim to that which you do not possess, the time will surely come, sooner or later, when you must learn about the penalty for making that unsubstantiated claim of yours!

O learned scholars [*‘ulamā’*], the acquisition of knowledge [*‘ilm*] is not an end in itself. The desired object is the fruit of knowledge. What is the use of the tree if it does not bear fruit? What is the use of knowledge unless it is acted upon and put into practice with sincerity [*ikhhlās*]? There is no point in acquiring knowledge of the Book and the Sunna, except for the purpose of putting them into practice. How could one derive any benefit from them, except through putting them into practice? The workman gets his wages, but only after he has done his work and labored at the job.

There is nothing really worth talking about until you come home from the journey through this world, the realm of physical existence [*wujūd*] and the created universe [*khalq*]. Once you have reached your destination, all will be clarified, revealed and explained.

As Allāh (Exalted is He) has said:

Observe your duty to Allāh. Allāh will teach you. (2:282)<sup>258</sup>

—and as Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) has also said:

And whoever is dutiful toward Allāh, He prepares a way out for him, and provides for him from sources he could never imagine. (65:2,3)<sup>259</sup>

<sup>258</sup> *wa ‘ittaqi ‘llāh: wa yu‘allimuka ‘llāh.*

<sup>259</sup> *wa man yattaqi ‘llāha yaj‘al labu makbrajā—wa yarzuqhu min ḥaitbu lā yaḥtasib.*

Devotion to one's religious duty [*taqwā*] is the foundation of all that is good; it is a source of worldly benefit, a source of wisdom [*ḥikma*] and all kinds of knowledge [*ʿulūm*], of purity of heart, and of many secrets. You must observe your duty toward Him, and be patient with Him. Patience [*ṣabr*] is the head of both religion and the worldly life [*ra's ad-dīn wa 'd-dunyā*], while active work [*ʿamal*] is their body. This is why the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) has said:

Patience is to faith as the head is to the body.<sup>260</sup>

It is only through patience under the decree of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) that deeds can be truly accomplished. You must be patient. You must be steadfast. You must practice pious restraint. It is incumbent upon you to practice pious restraint [*warāʿ*] both in your private lives and in your public activities. It is also incumbent upon you to make a practice of abstinent detachment [*zuhd*] from allotted shares [*aqsām*] that are destined to come your way,<sup>261</sup> and of indifference toward the allotted shares of other people.

How long will you go on squandering your religion for the sake of worldly status, for the sake of amassing commercial tokens [*ghallāt*]<sup>262</sup> and gold coins [*danānīr*], clothes, houses, jewels, horses and servants? All of this stems from idle fantasy. These things will soon be separated from you. You must turn again to your Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He). Turn right around and you will prosper! Abandon this folly, this confusion and craziness! Why should you take such trouble to accumulate things, when you will have to leave them behind for others to inherit,

<sup>260</sup> *aṣ-ṣabru minā 'l-īmāni ka 'r-ra'si minā 'l-jasad.*

<sup>261</sup> In order to clarify this point, we may refer to the following passages from *The Sublime Revelation [al-Faṭḥ ar-Rabbānī]*, where Shaikh 'Abd al-Qādir (may Allāh be well pleased with him) says:

Abstinence [*zuhd*] is a righteous intention [*niyya ṣāliha*], otherwise no one can renounce his allotted portion. The believer is relieved of the burden of cupidity [*ḥirṣ*]. He is not greedy and does not want things in a hurry. He abstains from things with his heart, turning away from them and devoting himself to what he is commanded to do. He knows that his allotted portion will not pass him by, so he does not go looking for it. He leaves his allotments to run after him and humbly beg him to accept them. (From the Twenty-eighth Discourse, p. 195 of the Al-Baz edition).

Whenever you run away from your allotted shares [*aqsām*], they cling to you and come chasing after you, so it is not really possible to abstain from them. It is nevertheless essential to avoid them before they are due to arrive. (From the Fifty-fourth Discourse, p. 371 of the Al-Baz edition).

<sup>262</sup> Strictly speaking, according to the Arabic lexicographers, *ghallāt* are monetary units that are rejected by the treasury of the state, but accepted by the merchants in everyday business transactions. (See E.W. Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, art. *GH-L-L*.)

and when you alone will be called to account for them at the Reckoning? Of all that you accumulate, not a single atom is really useful to you. You will gain nothing from all that you possess, except the burden of explaining how you came by it, accounting for it, being punished for it, losing it and regretting it. What is the matter with you? Why don't you buy some common sense from me? Come here to me! Sit here in front of me and listen to the good advice I have to offer you. I am well aware of that which you fail to recognize, and I can see things that belong to the hereafter, things that you cannot see.

Woe unto you! Righteous deeds are those that will keep the torment away from you in your graves. The Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) is reported as having said:

When the believer [*mu'min*] is left alone in his grave, his charitable gift [*ṣadaqa*] will come and sit by his head, his ritual prayer [*ṣalāt*] by his right side, his fasting [*ṣiyām*] by his left side, and his patience [*ṣabr*] by his feet. Then the torment will approach him near his head, but the charitable gift will say: "There is no way for you to get past me!" It will then approach him from the right, but the ritual prayer will say: "There is no way for you to get past me!" So it will try to reach him from the left, but the fasting will say: "There is no way for you to get past me!" It will then try from the direction of his feet, but his patience will say: "I am here at the ready. If you need me, I shall come to your aid."

O my people! You must see it as your duty to share your own blessings with the poor [*fuqarā'*], and to treat them with special consideration even when faith [*īmān*] is weak. Charitable sharing [*mu'āsāt*] is appropriate when faith is strong, and they are entitled to special consideration [*ithār*] even when you are personally in distress. You must entertain the poor with generosity, or send them away in the kindest manner possible when you have nothing to give. The Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) is reported as having said:

Allāh's gift to His servant is the beggar at his door.<sup>263</sup>

Woe unto you! You are unwilling to accept the gift of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), so you send it away! In a very short time you will see your report. Poverty will come to you, to drive out your affluence and take its place. Sickness will come to you, to drive out your good health and take its place. Do not gamble with the most important blessings that

<sup>263</sup> *badiyyatu 'llābi ilā 'abdibi 's-sā'ilu 'alā bābih.*



you now have from your Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He). The true believer [*mu'min*] realizes that the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He) would not send the beggar to him except as an act of love, so he gives that beggar some part of the bountiful favor that he has himself received. He recognizes that, when he gives the beggar a gift, treats him with respect, and accepts the fact that he has a responsibility toward him, he is himself being given the most perfect, the most abundant and the most excellent gift that he could ever receive in this world and the hereafter.

O you backslider! You cultivate relations with the sultans, the princes and the wealthy, in pursuit of worldly status and material gain, but you fail to cultivate relations with the King of kings [*Malik al-mulūk*], the Wealthiest of the wealthy [*Aghna 'l-aghniyā'*], the One who never dies, the One who is never in need. If you lend Him a loan, He will repay you many times over.<sup>264</sup> In return for one dirham [silver coin] He will give you ten in this world, and your reward in the hereafter will never be diminished. He will give you blessed grace [*baraka*] in this world, and the full reward in the hereafter. Surely you must have heard how He has said (Exalted is He):

And whatever you spend [in a good cause], He will replace it. (34:39)<sup>265</sup>

O Allāh, grant us the blessing of Your love [*maḥabba*], and make it a pleasant experience for us to serve You and to stand in waiting at Your door, in the company of all the members of Your community [*umma*], and:

Give us in this world good, and good in the hereafter, and guard us against the torment of the fire! (2:201)<sup>266</sup>



<sup>264</sup> A clear allusion to the verse [*āya*] of the Qur'ān in which Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) has said:

If you lend unto Allāh a goodly loan, He will multiply it for you [*in tuqriḍu 'llāha qarḍan ḥasanan yuḍā 'ifhu lakum*]. (64:17)

<sup>265</sup> *wa mā anfaqtum min shai'in fa-Huwa yukblifub.*

<sup>266</sup> *ātīnā fi 'd-dunyā ḥasanatan wa fi 'l-ākhirati ḥasanatan wa qinā 'adbāba 'n-nār.*

## The Thirty-ninth Discourse

**T**he Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) is reported as having said:

Gabriel (blessing and peace be upon him) once said to me: “Allāh does not bestow His compassion upon those who do not treat their fellow human beings with compassion. Allāh treats with compassion only those of His servants who are themselves compassionate. You must show compassion toward those who are upon the earth, then those who are up in heaven will show compassion toward you.”

O you who wish for merciful compassion [*rahma*] from Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), you must weigh out the price of it, for only then will it fall into your hand. What is its price? The compassion with which you treat your fellow creatures, your kindness toward them, and the betterment they experience because of you. You would like to have something for nothing, but it will not just fall into your hand. You must first pay the price [*thaman*], then you may take the object of value [*muthman*]. Woe unto you! You claim to have genuine awareness [*ma' rifa*] of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), yet you fail to treat His creatures with compassion. If a person is truly aware of Him, he will view every creature as deserving of compassion from the standpoint of knowledge [*'ilm*], while from the standpoint of the law [*hukm*] he may view one set of people as worthy of compassion, but not so another set of people. The law differentiates, while knowledge unites.

In the words of Allāh (Exalted is He):

So go into houses by their proper doors. (2:189)<sup>267</sup>

As for those Shaikhs who put their knowledge into practice, those who are sincerely devoted and genuinely honest, they are the doorways of the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He). They are the pathways that lead to His nearness, for they are the heirs and the gatekeepers of the

<sup>267</sup> *wa'tu 'l-buyūta min abwābibā.*

Prophets [*anbiyā'*] and Messengers [*mursalīn*] (may the blessings and peace of Allāh be upon them all). They are the ones who have been singled out by the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He), and the ones who must summon others to Him. They are ambassadors between Him and their fellow creatures. They are the physicians of the religion [*dīn*] and the teachers of their fellow creatures. You must accept them and be prepared to serve them. You must surrender your ignorant selves to the hand of their instruction.

The allocation of the means of sustenance is controlled by the hand of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), whether it be the sustenance of our physical bodies, the sustenance of our hearts, or the sustenance of our innermost beings [*asrār*]. It is therefore to Him that you must apply for all forms of sustenance, and not to anyone other than Him. The sustenance of our physical bodies is ordinary food and drink. The sustenance of our hearts is the affirmation of Divine Unity [*tawhīd*], and the sustenance of our innermost beings is the remembrance of Him in private [*adh-dhikr al-khafī*].

The way to show compassion toward your own lower selves [*anfus*] is by waging a dedicated struggle to bring them under control, by letting them know what they must do and what they are not allowed to do, and by putting them through a course of rigorous training. The way to show compassion toward your fellow creatures is by commanding them to do what is right and fair [*ma'rūf*], by forbidding them to do what is wrong and unfair [*munkar*], by being honest with them when you offer them advice and counsel, and by taking them by the hand and leading them to the door of their Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He). Merciful compassion is one of the attributes of the true believers [*mu'minīn*], while merciless cruelty is one of the attributes of the unbelievers [*kāfirīn*].

You must keep a connection with those who would cut you off, give to those who would deprive you, and pardon those who have done you wrong. If you act like this, your cord will be connected to the lifeline of Allāh [*ḥabl Allāh*]. You must exchange what may seem appropriate to you for that which is appropriate in His sight, because these moral standards [*akhlāq*] are some of the moral standards of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He).

You must answer the call of the muezzins [*mu'adhdhinīn*] who

summon you to the mosques [*masājid*], for the mosque is the home of [divine] hospitality, the home of intimate conversation [with the Lord] [*munājāt*]. You must respond to their call, for you will meet with salvation and protection in their presence. If you respond to the call of one who summons you to Him, He will cause you to enter His abode. He will answer your prayers. He will draw you near. He will instruct you in awareness [*maʿrifā*] and knowledge [*ʿilm*]. He will show you what He has at His disposal. He will train the limbs and organs of your physical bodies. He will cleanse your hearts and purify your innermost beings [*asrār*]. He will guide you and direct you, and He will cause you to reside in His presence. He will cause your hearts to reach the abode of His nearness, and He will permit them to enter therein. He is a Generous Host [*Karīm*]. If you respond to His invitation, and never underestimate His worth, He will answer your prayers. He will treat you with kindness and bestow favors upon you. As He Himself has said (Almighty and Glorious is He):

Shall the reward of goodness be anything but goodness? (55:60)<sup>268</sup>

If you act in a way that is good, He will make good the reward. To quote the words of the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace):

As you pay allegiance, so shall you receive allegiance. According to how you are, responsibility shall be entrusted to you. Your actions are your agents.<sup>269</sup>

You must be in this world with hearts that are ill at ease. Do not try to feel at home in it, for it is not a suitable abode in which to settle and establish residence. There is a homeland elsewhere. This abode is a prison in comparison with the abode of the hereafter, which is why the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) has told us:

This world is the believer's prison and the unbeliever's paradise.<sup>270</sup>

It would still be the believer's prison, even if he were to live in it for a thousand years, with all its bounty at his disposal. It is in the hereafter that he finds his joy and happiness, his Garden of Paradise, his plentiful abundance, his reward, his empire, his power to say yea and nay, and his space in which to feel at ease.

<sup>268</sup> *bal jazāʿu ʿl-iḥsāni illa ʿl-iḥsān.*

<sup>269</sup> *kamā tadīnu tudānu—kamā takūnū yuwallā ʿalaikum—aʿmālukum ʿummālukum.*

<sup>270</sup> *ad-dunyā sijnu ʿl-muʿmini wa jannatu ʿl-kāfir.*

In the case of the one who knows by direct experience, the one who puts his knowledge into practice, the champion of the truth [*al-ʿarīf al-ʿāmil aṣ-ṣiddīq*], his reward is already available to him here in this world, before the hereafter, and it is the nearness of his Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He). He wishes that the Garden of Paradise had never been created. He regards the Resurrection [*Qiyāma*] as a mercy. He can see that in the Resurrection lies the emergence of his secret soul [*sarīra*], because on that Day our innermost beings [*asrār*] will be transformed into outwardly visible faces. He sees himself following in the footsteps of the people [of the Lord], as he rises from his grave. He is bedecked with ornaments and clad in fine clothes, and is being greeted by attendants ready to escort him, with steeds for him to ride. But his heart is quite detached from anything like this. He is actually averse to such merciful compassion, because he is so completely satisfied with his Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He). He loves the Benefactor [*Munʿim*], not the benefit [*niʿma*]. He would love to enter into the presence of the King by way of the secret door [*bāb as-sirr*], not riding in stately procession. He dislikes the prospect of having to visit the Garden of Paradise, because he no longer has any interest in anything apart from Him. He would love it if he never had to see the Garden of Paradise. He is not attached to it, nor is he dazzled by its blissful charm. He longs for nothing but the love of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He).

When someone no longer has any interest in anything apart from Him, he will never take a step that would lead him away from his Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He), and he will never let himself be distracted by anything other than Him. But He has deferred his meeting with Him, and has invited him to join the company of someone who is already well acquainted with Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) here in this world, before the hereafter, someone who breathes the fragrant scent of His nearness, eats the food of His gracious favor, and drinks the drink of the innermost being [*sirr*].

I am calling out to you, O you hypocrites [*munāfiqīn*], but you do not hear me. If you do in fact hear, you pretend to be deaf and do not respond. You are so far away. You are being summoned from a distant place. Your whole concern is with your bellies, your sexual organs, your physical

bodies, and all your worldly interests. This is not the concern of a saint [*walī*]. Hunger is the food of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) here on this earth. It is quite enough to satisfy the stomachs of the champions of truth [*ṣiddīqīn*]. Poverty is the fear of poverty, and affluence is being satisfied with Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) to the exclusion of everything apart from Him. Affluence is not to be measured in terms of dirhams and dīnārs [coins of silver and gold].

You must put your own lower self [*nafs*] through the experience of the Resurrection. Walk into the fire of Hell and the Garden of Paradise on the feet of your mental faculty, and look at what they contain with the eyes of your head and your sense of certainty [*yaqīn*]. There is always more work for the true believer [*mu'min*] to be doing, until his faculties of thought and perception are in good order, for only then will he be ready to make himself undergo the experience of the Resurrection. He will stand in the presence of his Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He) and read the scrolls on which his deeds have been recorded. There he will see all his good deeds, and there he will see all his bad deeds. He must find out whether his good deeds count for more than the bad, or whether his bad deeds will cause him to fall into the Fire of Hell. He wishes to cross over the narrow bridge [*ṣirāt*], so he moves forward and steps upon it, poised between fear and hope, between the fear of falling to his destruction and the hope of reaching the other side intact. Then, just when he is embarking on this balancing act, Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) will suddenly intervene on his behalf. He will order him to step back, while He widens the bridge beneath his feet. Through His merciful compassion, He will also prevent the flames of the Fire of Hell from scorching him, and the Fire will then say to him: "Pass through, O believer, for your light has extinguished my flame."

The true believer [*mu'min*] must reflect on this whole process, giving it his full attention all the way through. He must form a clear concept of it and evaluate it carefully. He must go on believing that it is really happening, until it becomes a positive certainty as far as he is concerned.

O learned scholars [*ulamā'*], you are cutting yourselves off from this blessed opportunity, which I have set forth for your benefit, because you insist on chasing after the quotas of worldly goods that have been allotted

to you by destiny. Stop chasing after them, and they will soon come running after you! This is something I have tried and tested, and I have witnessed the truth of it in my personal experience, as have many of my fellow travelers on this spiritual path. You must not be so impatient, for whatever is meant for you will never pass you by. The Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) is reported as having said:

Your lower self [*nafs*] will not depart from this world until it has received its sustenance in full measure.

It behooves you, therefore, to devote yourselves to your duty to Allāh, and to behave with politeness and courtesy in the process of seeking the things you need. You must proceed at an unhurried pace, and not be greedy and demanding. You should try this approach for yourselves, if you find it absolutely necessary to go off on a quest. If you knock at the door of the King, He will open unto you a door that will never be locked shut—the door of the innermost being [*sirr*], the door of the inner life [*bāṭin*]. It will be opened for you without your having to exert your own power, your own strength, or your own capacity for taking thought.

The true believer [*mu' min*] is someone who sets out from the house of his lower self [*nafs*], his passions [*hawā*] and his natural inclinations [*ṭab'*], heading in the direction of his Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He). As soon as he has embarked on this course, however, down comes an obstacle to block his path. This obstacle presents itself in the form of misfortunes affecting himself, his family and his property, so he stops in his tracks, feeling bewildered and confused. Then he looks back at his sins and his bad behavior. He has transgressed the limits set by the sacred law [*shar'*] of his Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He), so now he must repent and make amends for this transgression. He is obliged to hold his tongue and stop asking 'why?' and 'how?' He maintains his silence both inwardly and outwardly, refraining from supplication and from argument. He surrenders his own will and falls prostrate in humble submission. He does not try to probe that mystery [*sirr*], even though it is right there in front of him, with any movement of his hand or his faculty of reason. He does not turn to anyone else for help in order to reveal it, but awaits its revelation [*fath*] by his Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He). His conscious attention is wholly devoted to remembering Him and

turning back to Him in repentance, to recalling his sins and begging forgiveness for them, and to chastising his own lower self for having committed those sins. Then, when he has done this to the point of exhaustion, he refers at last to the destiny preordained by his Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He), as he says: “The decree [*qadar*] of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), His judgment [*qadāʾ*] and His foreordainment [*sābiqa*] have been eternally prerecorded as my destiny [*maktūb ʿalayya*].”

He must now resort to submission [*taslīm*] and commitment [*tafwīd*], as a matter that concerns the heart, not merely the tongue. Then, while he is in this state, with his head bowed low and his gaze downcast, he will suddenly open his eyes—to find that the mystery has vanished and the door has been opened, that blissful happiness has come to take the place of disasters and misfortunes, that ease and comfort have taken the place of difficulty and hardship, that good health and well-being have taken the place of sickness and disease, and that dominion [*mulk*] has taken the place of damnation [*hulk*]. All of this comes as confirmation of the truth so clearly stated in the words of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He):

And whenever someone observes his duty to Allāh, Allāh will prepare a way out for him. And He will provide for him from sources he could never imagine. And whoever puts all his trust in Allāh, He will suffice him. (65:2,3)<sup>271</sup>

The servant [of the Lord] will never fail to respond to blessings by offering grateful thanks, and he will always respond to trials and tribulations by accepting them with willing compliance, acknowledging his own sins and offences, and blaming his own lower self [*nafs*], until the footsteps of his heart have finally reached his Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He). He will always tread the path with the steps of good deeds and repentance from bad deeds, until he arrives at the doorway of his Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He). Then, when he has arrived there at last, he will see that which no eye has ever seen, of which no ear has ever heard, and of which no human heart has ever conceived.

Once the servant has arrived at the door of his Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He), it ceases to be the turn of deeds good and bad, of giving

<sup>271</sup> *wa man yattaqi ʾllāha yajʿal labu makbrajā—wa yarzūqhu min ḥaithu lā yaḥtasib—wa man yatawakkal ʾala ʾllābi fa-Huwa ḥasbuh.*



thanks and being patient, of toiling wearily and putting up with hardship, just as the traveler's footsteps come to a halt, as soon as he has reached the place where he intends to rest and give his camels a break. From now on, it is the turn of social intercourse, friendly entertainment, conversation, seeing face-to-face, and being present where the unseen [*ghaib*] is visible, so that hearsay is replaced by personal observation. The Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He) allows his servant to learn His secrets. He takes His guest on a tour, opens His treasure houses for him, and lets him stroll through His gardens. Can you not understand what this is all about?

Allāh coins similitudes for mankind [in order that they may reflect].  
(14:25)<sup>272</sup>

Symbolic expression is intelligible only to those who are skilled in the interpretation of symbols [*ahl al-ishāra*]. O worshipper without a present heart! Your likeness is that of the donkey whose eyes are blindfold while it turns the mill. It imagines that it has made a journey of many a long mile, when it has actually never left its place of work. Woe unto you! You stand up and sit down as you go through the motions of your ritual prayer [*ṣalāt*], and you suffer hunger and thirst while you are keeping your fast [*ṣawm*], but all without so much as one single atom of sincere devotion [*ikhhlās*] and affirmation of Divine Unity [*tawhīd*], so what good can it possibly do you? All you get from it is weary labor. You perform the prayers and keep the fast, but all the while the eye of your heart is on the contents of other people's houses, on what they have in their pockets and what they have on their plates. You keep watching them in the hope that they may give you something. You want them to notice your worship [*'ibāda*]. You want to make them recognize the fact that you are keeping the fast and making strenuous efforts of pious dedication.

O you idolatrous polytheist [*mushrik*]/! O you hypocrite [*munāfiq*]/! O you showy pretender [*murā'ī*]/! O you who claim to possess the character of spiritually developed champions of truth [*aṣ-ṣiddīqīn ar-rūḥāniyyīn*]/! Do you not realize that I am well aware of your true station and the arrogance of your presumption? I shall be suing you for

<sup>272</sup> *wa yaḍribu 'llābu 'l-amthāla li'n-nāsi [la'allahum yatadbakkarūn].*

making such claims! The Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) is reported as having said:

If the claims people make were accepted at face value, one group would claim the blood and property of another. But the proof must be furnished by the claimant, while the oath is required of the person who denies the validity of the claim [*al-bayyina* 'ala 'l-muddā 'i wa 'l-yamīn 'alā man ankar].<sup>273</sup>

You talk such a lot, and yet you do so little. You must try to turn this around. You must persevere with patience. When someone really knows [*'arafa*] Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), his tongue grows tired of talking and his heart acquires the faculty of speech, while his innermost being [*sirr*] remains pure and serene. He is promoted to a high degree in the presence of his Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He), enjoys comfort and relaxation in His company, and has all his needs satisfied by Him alone.

O fire of the hearts, be coolness and peace!<sup>274</sup> O hearts, you must make yourselves ready for the day on which the mountains will start to move, and on which the False Messiah [*Dajjāl*] will appear on the scene. If anyone proves steadfast on that day, standing firm on the feet of his faith [*īmān*], his sure conviction [*īqān*], his absolute trust [*tawakkul*], his love for his Master [*Mawlā*] and his yearning for Him, that person must be one who stands firm on the feet of his intimate knowledge [*ma' rifa*] of Him in this world, before the hereafter. The mountains of the material means [*asbāb*] and of creatures [*khalq*] will roll away, but the mountains of the Originator [*Musabbib*] and Creator [*Khāliq*] will remain in place. The mountains of the kings of the outer life [*zāhir*] and superficial forms will roll away and vanish into thin air, while the mountains of the kings of the inner life [*bātin*] will emerge into view and be firmly established.

The Day of Resurrection [*Yawm al-Qiyāma*] is the day of change and substitution. As for these mountains that you see and admire for their strength, their solidity, and the splendor of their constitution, they will come to be as if they were nothing more than carded wool [*ṣūf mandūf*]. They will cease to stand in the places to which they are accustomed. Their solid form will be dissolved, and they will blow away more quickly than the clouds. The sky will turn into something like the

<sup>273</sup> This is one of the basic principles of Islāmic jurisprudence.

<sup>274</sup> An allusion to the Qur'ānic verse [*āya*]:

O fire, be coolness and peace for Abraham [*yā nāru, kūnī bardan wa salāman 'alā Ibrāhīm*]. (21:69)

substance known as *muhl*, which is a kind of molten brass. Thus the nature of the earth and the sky will be utterly transformed. The turn of this world [*nawbat ad-dunyā*] will be over, as will the turn of [divine] wisdom [*ḥikma*], the turn of deeds [*a‘māl*], the turn of sowing and planting [*zira‘a*], the turn of standing on ceremony [*taklīf*]. It will now come to be the turn of the hereafter [*nawbat al-ākhirā*], the turn of [divine] power [*qudra*], the turn of recompense for deeds, the turn of the harvest [*ḥiṣād*], the turn of relaxation from having to stand on ceremony, the turn of giving what is due to everyone to whom a debt is owed [*i‘ṭā’ kull dhī ḥaqq ḥaqqah*], and of returning the favor to everyone to whom a favor is owed [*kull dhī faḍl faḍlah*].

O Allāh, let our hearts and our physical organs be firm and steadfast on that Day, and:

Give us in this world good, and good in the hereafter, and guard us against the torment of the fire! (2:201)<sup>275</sup>



<sup>275</sup> *ātina fi ‘d-dunyā ḥasanatan wa fi ‘l-ākhirati ḥasanatan wa qina ‘adbāba ‘n-nār.*

## The Fortieth Discourse

**T**he Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) is reported as having said:

You must observe a high standard of morality [*ḥusn al-khulq*] in your social relationships with people, for then, if you should die, they will pray for Allāh to bestow His mercy upon you [*yurāḥḥimū ‘alaikum*], and even if you are absent, they will still feel lovingly disposed toward you.

Pay careful heed to this piece of good advice. Attach it firmly to your hearts, and do not treat it as just an idea to be considered mentally and compared theoretically with other ideas. I have drawn your attention to something that may seem rather unimportant, but which carries a very considerable reward. How splendid is a good moral character, for it is a source of comfort to its owner and to other people as well, and how disgusting is a bad moral character, for it is a weary burden to its owner and a cause of pain to others! It is necessary for the true believer [*mu’min*] to wage a dedicated struggle against his own lower self [*nafs*], for the purpose of improving the quality of his moral character [*khulq*]. He must impose this particular discipline upon it, just as he must strive to train it in all other forms of worshipful obedience [*ṭā’āt*]. As long as the lower self [*nafs*] shows signs of recalcitrance and indignation, and a tendency to treat other people with contempt, you must continue the struggle until it is well and truly tamed. Once it is properly tamed, it will behave with humble modesty and meek submissiveness, and its moral character will be refined. It will recognize its own worth, and be tolerant of others. Before the dedicated struggle [*mujāhada*] is waged against it, the lower self [*nafs*] is a tyrannical Pharaoh [*Fir’awna*].<sup>276</sup>

Congratulations to anyone who recognizes the true nature of his own lower self [*nafs*], and then treats it as an enemy, opposing it whenever it

<sup>276</sup> Literally, a she-Pharaoh. The modern reader should not read any “male chauvinism” into this, since the use of the feminine form *Fir’awna*, instead of the more familiar masculine *Fir’awn*, can no doubt be simply explained by the fact that the word *nafs* is grammatically feminine in Arabic.

tries to tell him what to do! You must subject it constantly to the remembrance of death and of that which lies beyond death, for then it will become meekly submissive and its moral character will be improved. You must grasp it with the hand of contemplation, and cause it to enter the Fire of Hell and the Garden of Paradise, so that it can see what these contain, for then it will become meekly submissive and its moral character will be improved. You must contemplate the Resurrection [*Qiyāma*], and make your own lower selves [*anfus*] experience it, before the actual Resurrection comes to pass. The Resurrection will be a delight for one set of people, and an occasion of grief for another group. For some it will be a festival [*ʿīd*], while for others it will be a funeral ceremony [*maʿ tam*]. For some people it will be the day of the festival of the righteous [*ʿīd aṣ-ṣāliḥīn*], the day of their recreational parade, the day on which they get to wear their robes of honor and to mount their fine riding beasts, while their attendants come forth to escort them, and their banners are unfurled. Their good deeds will take on visible forms, the radiance of which will shine upon their faces.

If you have a serious interest in your Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He), and if you are seeking Him, you must stick close to me, and be content. If you are prepared to do this, well and good. If not, you are not being really honest. This path is not one that can be traveled in the company of the lower self [*nafs*], passionate desire [*hawā*], natural inclination [*tabʿ*], and the need to make a favorable impression on one's fellow creatures. I have disclosed the state of affairs to you, so if you wish, accept my terms. If not.... You [O Lord] are More Knowledgeable [*Aʿraf*]! If you do accept, I shall hope and pray that you may receive much good from Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He). Follow me, and do not fear for yourself on account of the hunger of the poor. You may rest assured that nothing but what you wish for is going to happen, and that you will experience nothing but good.

When I was just a little boy, I used to go off by myself to spend time alone in empty places. At certain moments, I would hear a voice, although I never saw a person, saying: "You are surely blessed with goodness, and you will surely acquire goodness!"<sup>277</sup> Whenever this happened, I would get up and explore my surroundings, since I had no

<sup>277</sup> *innaka bi-khairin wa innaka tasbtarī khairā.*

idea where that voice might be coming from, and—for which all praise is due to Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He)—I have experienced blessed grace [*baraka*] in all my circumstances.<sup>278</sup>

Among the servants of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), there are some who are empowered to say to something “Be!”—and it will thereupon come into being. You do not see them, however, and even if you did see them, you would fail to recognize them. You would slam your doors shut in their faces. You would tighten your purse strings in their presence, and you would not invite them to share the food on your table. Woe unto you! If you bolt your doors in the faces of the poor, Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) will shut you out, but if you open them in their faces, Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) will provide an opening for you. If you spend your financial resources to earn the favor of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), He will provide you with compensation, but if you spend those resources to earn the favor of your fellow creatures, He will make things difficult for you. Spend freely on good causes, and do not be stingy, for generosity is from Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), while stinginess is from the devil [*shaiṭān*]. As Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) has said:

The devil promises you poverty, and instructs you to behave with gross indecency. (2:268)<sup>279</sup>

This is in contrast to what Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) has promised you, namely, compensation in return for charitable expenditure, for He has said (Exalted is He):

And whatever thing you shall expend, He will replace it. (34:39)<sup>280</sup>

Woe unto you! You lay claim to Islām, yet you disagree with the Messenger (Allāh bless him and give him peace), and you introduce into his religion whatever novelty your whims and passions desire. You have been telling a lie concerning your Islām. Far from being a faithful follower [*muttabi*’], you are in fact a heretical innovator [*mubtadi*’]. Far

<sup>278</sup> In the *Utterances of Shaikh ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī* [*Malḥūzāt*], we find this same childhood experience related in the following words (see p. 34 of the translation published by Al-Baz):

In my childhood, back in my home town, I used to hear someone saying to me, “O blessed one [*iyā mubārak!*]” I would run away from that voice, but then in solitude I would hear someone saying to me: “I think well of you.”

<sup>279</sup> *ash-shaiṭānu ya’idukumu ‘l-faqr wa ya’murukum bi’l-fahshā’.*

<sup>280</sup> *wa mā anfaqtum min shai’in fa-Huwa yukblifuh.*

from being harmoniously compliant, you are actually an incompatible dissident. Surely you must have heard how the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) has told us:

Follow [the Book and the Sunna], and do not introduce heretical innovations, for you have been given everything you need.

You must also have heard his saying (Allāh bless him and give him peace):

I have left you in possession of unambiguous evidence.

You claim to be a faithful follower of his (Allāh bless him and give him peace), yet you contradict his words. You are quite unworthy of any respect!

I am simply telling the truth, so if you wish to love me, well and good, but you do not have to love me, if you do not wish to do so. If you wish to praise me, well and good, but you may also blame me, if you so wish.

As Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) has said:

Say: "O mankind, the truth has come to you from your Lord."  
(10:108)<sup>281</sup>

So, if there is anyone who wishes to believe, let him believe, and if there is someone who wishes to disbelieve, let him disbelieve. No one will run away from what I have to say, unless he is a hypocrite [*munāfiq*], an impostor [*dajjāl*], a heretical innovator [*bid'ī*], someone who is motivated by his whims and passions [*hawā*], someone who readily complies with his own lower self [*nafs*], someone who is at variance with the Book of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) and the Sunna of His Messenger (Allāh bless him and give him peace), someone who is a hater of the truth and a lover of falsehood, someone whose heart takes no steps in the direction of closeness to his Master [*Mawlā*] (Almighty and Glorious is He).

Use the ears and eyes of your heart to listen and look, without doubt and suspicion, then watch out for the marvelous wonders you will see! You must cease to view the people [of the Lord] with doubt and suspicion. Acknowledge the fact that they always tell the truth, and be ready to accept instruction from them, without asking 'why?' and 'how?', for then they will adopt you as a member of their company. They will regard you as fit to enter their service, and they will share with you whatever blessings are bestowed upon them. Blessings and favors are bestowed upon the hearts of the champions of truth [*siddīqīn*], and

<sup>281</sup> *qul yā ayyuha 'n-nāsu qad jā 'akumu 'l-ḥaqqu min Rabbikum.*

secrets are communicated to their innermost beings [*asrār*], by night and by day. If you wish them to regard you as fit to enter their service, you must purify your character, both on the outside [*ẓāhir*] and on the inside [*bāṭin*], and stand before them at the ready. You must purify your heart by purging it of any heretical innovation [*bidʿa*], for the doctrine [*iʿtiqād*] of the people [of the Lord] is the doctrine of the Prophets [*nabiyyīn*], the Messengers [*mursalīn*], and the champions of the truth [*ṣiddiqīn*] (may the blessings and peace of Allāh be upon them all). Theirs is the school [*madhhab*] to which they adhere [in respect of religious tenets and practices], the school of the righteous predecessors. They would never make a claim that could not be substantiated, and whenever they do make a claim, it is supported by the testimony of two impeccable witnesses, whose honorable status is definitely beyond suspicion, namely, the Book of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) and the Sunna of His Messenger (Allāh bless him and give him peace).

O my people, you may do injustice to yourselves, but you must not do injustice to others! Injustice [*ẓulm*] brings about the ruin of whole countries, and puts an end to their development. It darkens hearts and faces, and causes the means of livelihood to be in short supply. Do not perpetrate injustice [*lā taẓlimū*], for it will result in darkness [*ẓulma*] on the Day of Resurrection [*Yawm al-Qiyāma*].<sup>282</sup> The resurrection of our physical bodies is something we shall experience all too soon. The Creator of our physical bodies will make us stand before Him, while He calls us to account and submits us to interrogation. He will ask us about everything, be it little or much, and He will hold us responsible for the tiniest details.

I am simply acting as a counselor [*nāsiḥ*] for your benefit. I am not seeking any remuneration from you in exchange for my good advice!

You must not get anywhere close to transactions in which usurious

<sup>282</sup> This passage is strongly reminiscent of the words uttered by Shaikh ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jilānī (may Allāh be well pleased with him) at the beginning of the Seventeenth Discourse (see p. 111 of the present work):

O servants of Allāh! Beware of injustice [*ẓulm*], for it will result in darkness and gloom [*ẓulumāt*] on the Day of Resurrection. Injustice causes both the heart and the face to turn completely dark. Beware of the prayer of supplication offered by one who has been treated unjustly [*mazlūm*]. Beware of the tears shed by one who has suffered injustice, and of the fire that burns in the heart of the victim of oppression. The believer [*muʾmin*] does not die until he has seen vengeance inflicted on his oppressor [*ẓālim*], until he has witnessed his death, the blackness of mourning at his door, the orphanhood of his children, the seizure of his material possessions, and the transfer of his authority to someone else.



interest [*ribā*] is involved, for that would amount to waging war against your Lord, and would result in the removal of blessed grace [*baraka*] from your material resources.<sup>283</sup> When you make a loan, the terms of repayment should be exactly one *dīnār* [gold coin] for one *dīnār*. If anyone among you is capable of making a loan to a poor person, and of waiving the repayment after some time for the sake of Allāh, he should certainly do so. He will thereby make that person happy on two occasions, first by means of the loan itself, and then again by the waiver. You should do this with a sense of relying on your Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He) and having confidence in Him. He will surely provide compensation, reward you, and bless you for it. You must make every effort to avoid turning the beggar away empty-handed. Give him whatever you can readily afford, however little it may be, for a little something is better than total deprivation. If you really cannot come up with anything at all, you should at least refrain from shooing him away with angry words. Try to say something kind and gentle to him as you send him on his way, so that you do not break his heart with utter disappointment!

The face of this world is very changeable indeed; its complexion varies with the alternating of the night and the day. Whenever someone dies, he actually experiences his personal resurrection [*qiyāma*], and becomes aware of what he has to his credit and of what is counted against him. Everything has its terminating counterpart: well-being is terminated by affliction, affluence by poverty, life by death, honor by humiliation. All of these things are opposites. As one of them arrives, its opposite departs, and in the hereafter there is the termination of death. In the case of the believer [*mu' min*] who is spiritually aware [*' ārif*], no sooner does he close the eyes of his head than the eyes of his heart open wide, so that he sees his fellow creatures in the state they happen to be in at that moment. Then, as soon as the eyes of his heart have closed, the eyes of his head open wide, and he sees the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He) and His ways of managing the realm of creation. As soon as the Lord of Truth [*Ḥaqq*] makes His presence felt, the realm of creation [*khalq*] departs. As soon as the hereafter makes its presence felt, this world departs. As soon

<sup>283</sup> As Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) has told us in the Qur'ān:

That which you give in usury [*ribā*], so that it may grow on other people's wealth, does not grow at all with Allāh. (30:39)

as honesty [*ṣidq*] makes its presence felt, lying departs. As soon as sincere devotion [*ikhhlās*] makes its presence felt, the association of partners with Allāh [*shirk*] departs. As soon as faith [*īmān*] makes its presence felt, hypocrisy [*nifāq*] departs. Each item has an opposite to match it.

The sensible person pays attention to the ultimate consequences [*‘awāqib*]. He does not focus his attention on this world and its glamorous charm, for it must very soon pass away and come to an end. All of you will come to an end, then it will also come to an end after you are gone.

You must not run away, trying to escape from the company of your Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He) on account of the painful sufferings that are sent by Him to afflict you, for He is More Aware [*A‘ lam*] of your best interests than you yourselves, and you must receive a proper education. He comes down upon the hearts of the champions of truth [*ṣiddīqīn*], so you may salute them with the greeting of peace, and ask them to intercede on your behalf. Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) is the One who enables and empowers [*al-Mumakkīn*]. He clasps their hearts to His bosom, kisses the eyes of their hearts, and raises them up through patience [*ṣabr*], compliance [*muwāfaqa*] and contentment [*riḍā*]. You will therefore remain in His presence for a while, but then you will be taken away from His presence, and the question will be asked: “How did you regard the situation and the hospitality you received there?” To this you will reply: “What an excellent situation, and how excellent the Host! How excellent the guidance, and how excellent the Guide!”

One of these spiritual masters [*sāda*] (may Allāh bestow His mercy upon them all) had just been through the agony of a very painful ordeal, when some people came and asked him: “How was it for you during the experience of that ordeal?” To this he replied: “Ask the ordeal about me!”

You must all be patient with your Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He), for He will surely bring your trials and tribulations to an end, and He will raise your spiritual degrees in His sight, as a reward for your patience. Be with Him, in spite of your own lower selves [*anfus*]. Be with those who sincerely believe in Him, and who are actively practicing what they believe, in His company, because of Him, and for His sake.

O Allāh, grant us control of the instruments we need, and make things easy for us! Open up good opportunities for us, and make our way smooth! Āmīn.

Faith [*īmān*] brings with it an increase in sickness, poverty, hunger, and the abundance of cares and concerns. If this does not happen, it is not true faith. The essential nature [*jawhar*] of faith becomes clearly apparent in the presence of misfortune, and its light shines brightly in the presence of trials and tribulations, just as courage becomes manifest in the presence of the army that threatens disaster. Your Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He) is fully Aware [*Khabīr*] of what all of you are doing, O kings [*mulūk*] and slaves [*mamālīk*], O members of the élite class [*khawāṣṣ*], O common folk [*‘awāmm*], O affluent ones [*aghniyā’*], O indigent paupers [*fuqarā’*], O hermits in your cells [*ahl al-khalawāt*]! No one has a screen behind which to hide from Him, for He (Exalted is He) is with you wherever you may be!

O Allāh, grant us protection [*sitr*], forgiveness [*ghufrān*], pardon [*‘afw*], kindness [*lutf*], clemency [*ḥilm*], tolerance [*tajāwuz*], providential care [*‘ināya*], sufficiency [*kifāya*], well-being [*‘āfiya*], and amnesty [*mu’āfat*]! Āmīn.

Whatever you are involved in, be it good or evil, truth or falsehood, sincere devotion [*ikhhlās*] or the association of partners with Allāh [*shirk*], worshipful obedience or sinful disobedience, He (Exalted is He) is All-Knowing [*‘Alīm*], Ever-Aware [*Khabīr*], Ever-Watchful [*Raqīb*], Ever-Present [*Hāḍir*], Ever-Witnessing [*Shāhid*]. You must feel a sense of shame, knowing that you are subject to His scrutinizing gaze (Exalted is He). Look with the eye of faith [*īmān*], for then you will see that His gaze (Exalted is He) is directed at you from all the six directions [i.e., from right and left, from in front and behind, from above and below].

Are these stern lectures [*mawā‘iz*] not sufficient for you? If only you would take advice, and listen with the ears of your hearts! All that you really need in this business is to feel the fear of your Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He), in both your private and your public lives. You must always be vigilantly aware of Him (Exalted is He). You must be conscious of the fact that He is watching you, and that your conduct is being monitored by the angels, the Noble Recorders [*al-Kirām al-Kātibīn*].<sup>284</sup>

<sup>284</sup> These guardian angels are mentioned in the Qur’ān:

Yet over you there are guardians, noble beings, recorders who know whatever you do [*wa inna ‘alaikum la-ḥāfiẓīn—kirāman kātibīn—ya‘lamūna mā taf‘alūn*]. (82:10-12)

You should indeed be afraid of the pair [of angels assigned to keep the record of your deeds], for then you need not be afraid of the penalties prescribed by Islāmic law [*ḥudūd sharʿiyya*] that could be imposed upon you by your worldly ruler [*sulṭān*] and your political leader [*amīr*]. If only you would be afraid [of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) and the recording angels], the person responsible for looking after you would not have any trouble with you!

O you poor creature! O starving wretch! O naked one! O needy one! You are crying out for help, but silence is preferable in your case, and it will prove more beneficial to you. The fact that He (Exalted is He) has knowledge [*ʿilm*] of your condition is enough to relieve you of the need to beg. His only reason for putting you to the test is to get you to come back to Him, so take your heart back to Him, stand firm, and see what good things you receive! Do not be impatient with Him, do not accuse Him of stinginess, and do not regard Him with doubt and suspicion. Exalted is He! He has caused you to experience hunger, nakedness, and poverty. He has doubts about you, so He (Exalted is He) is looking to see whether you will stick close to His door, or to the door of someone other than Him; whether you will be content with Him, or dissatisfied with Him; whether you will be grateful to Him, or complain about Him; whether you will yell at Him, or beseech Him in a humble tone of voice. He is putting you to the test in order to see how you behave.

O ignorant ones, you have left the door of the Wealthy One [*al-Ghanī*] (Exalted is He) and attached yourselves to the door of the indigent pauper. You have left the door of the Noble One [*al-Karīm*] and attached yourselves to the door of the ignoble scoundrel. You have left the door of the All-Capable One [*al-Qādir*] and attached yourselves to the door of someone who is quite incompetent. O you who are so ignorant about Him, the time is not far off when He will gather all of you together in His presence [on the Day of Resurrection]. He will make you stand before Him on that day, the Day of the Assembly [*Yawm al-Jamʿ*],<sup>285</sup> in order

According to the traditional commentaries, every human being is constantly supervised by two of these guardian angels, one on the right hand to record the person's good deeds, and one on the left to record the bad deeds committed.

<sup>285</sup> An allusion to the Qurʾānic verse (*āya*) in which Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) has said:

On the day when He shall gather you for the Day of the Assembly; that shall be the day of mutual fraud [*yawma yajmaʿukum li-yawmi ʿl-jamʿi dbālīka yawmu ʿl-tagbābun*]. (64:9)

to group you according to the various categories to which you belong. O all you creatures! Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) has said:

This is the Day of Decision. We have assembled you together with the people of ancient times, so if you have a trick to play, try now to trick Me! (77:38,39)<sup>286</sup>

On the Day of Resurrection [*Yawm al-Qiyāma*], Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) will gather all His creatures together on an earth which is not this earth, but one upon which no human blood has ever been shed, and where no sin has ever been committed. This is something about which there can be no doubt, and concerning which there is no uncertainty. As Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) has said:

And because the Hour is coming, of that there is no doubt, and because Allāh will raise up those who are in the graves. (22:7)<sup>287</sup>

The Day of Resurrection [*Yawm al-Qiyāma*] will be the day of mutual cheating [*taghābun*],<sup>288</sup> the day of grief, the day of remorse, the day of recalling to mind, the day of compliance, the day of testimony, the day of stories, the day of gladness, the day of sorrow, the day of fear, the day of security from fear, the day of bliss, the day of torment, the day of rest, the day of weary labor, the day of thirst, the day of freedom from affliction, the day of clothing, the day of nakedness, the day of profit, the day of loss, the day on which the true believers [*mu`minūn*] will rejoice in the help they receive from Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He).

O Allāh, we take refuge with You from the evil of that day, and we beg You to grant us something good.

Give us in this world good, and good in the hereafter, and guard us against the torment of the fire! (2:201)<sup>289</sup>



<sup>286</sup> *bādbā yawmu 'l-faṣl; jama'nākum wa 'l-auwalīn—fa-in kāna lakum kaidun fa-kīdūn.*

<sup>287</sup> *wa anna 's-sā'ata ātiyatun lā raiba fihā wa anna 'llāba yab'athu man fi 'l-qubūr.*

<sup>288</sup> The Day of Resurrection is so described in the Qur'ān (64:9). See n.<sup>285</sup> above.

<sup>289</sup> *ātinā fi 'd-dunyā ḥasanatan wa fi 'l-ākhirati ḥasanatan wa qinā 'adbāba 'n-nār.*

## The Forty-first Discourse

‘*ibāda* [worshipful service] means giving up ‘*āda* [customary practice], since the former abrogates and supersedes the latter. The effect of the sacred law [*shar‘*] is to abrogate and abolish customary practice. You must therefore adhere to the sacred law of your Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He) and give up your customary practices [‘*ādāt*]. The learned scholar is firmly committed to ‘*ibāda* [worshipful service], while the ignorant person sticks to ‘*āda* [customary practice].

You must accustom [‘*awwidū*] yourselves, your children and your wives to do what is good, and to make a constant practice of so doing. You must accustom your hands to spending the resources of this world on charitable causes, and you must accustom your hearts to detachment from such worldly things. You must not be so stingy as to withhold them from those who are in need of them. You must not turn away empty-handed those who come to you as beggars, for if you do so, the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He) may turn you away empty-handed when you come begging to Him. Why should He not reject your plea, when you have rejected His gift? Allāh’s Messenger (Allāh bless him and give him peace) has told us:

Allāh’s gift to His servant is the beggar at his door.<sup>290</sup>

Woe unto you! Have you no sense of shame? You know for a fact that your neighbor is struggling with poverty and hunger, yet you deprive him of what you have to give, on the strength of some futile pretext. You say: “He has a hidden store of gold, and he is merely putting on a show of poverty.” You lay claim to faith [*īmān*], yet you go off to sleep while your neighbor is starving. You have plenty to spare, yet you do not give him anything. The time is not far off, when all that now belongs to you will be snatched from your hand, when that which is now at your disposal will

<sup>290</sup> *badiyyatu ‘llābi ilā ‘abdibi ‘s-sā’ilu ‘alā bābib.*

be removed from your control, when you will suffer humiliation and be subjected to coercion and duress, and when you will be parted from this world of yours, which is your dearly beloved darling.

You should forsake this world of your own free will [*ikhtiṭyāran*], not out of compulsion [*iḍṭirāran*]. You should keep your attention focused on your own allotted shares of worldly goods, and keep your eyes off those which destiny has assigned to other people. You should be satisfied with no more than it takes to stay alive and well, and to cover the body's private parts [*ʿawra*], because if anything else is meant to be yours, it will surely come your way when the time for it is ripe. Such is the conduct of those who keep themselves pure and guard their chastity, avoiding the burden of greed and degradation.

The truly pious abstainers [*zuhhād*] are those who had come to know this world quite intimately. Their decision to go the way of abstinence was based on nothing less than firsthand knowledge [*maʿ rifa*] and direct experience [*tajriba*]. They had learned by their personal experience that this world [is like a woman<sup>291</sup> who] steps forward with a friendly greeting, and then turns her back and slips away; that she gives, and then takes; that she approaches, and then withdraws; that she loves, and then hates; that she fattens, and then devours; that she raises expectations to great heights, and then dashes them to the ground. You must clear her out of your hearts and your spiritual contents [*maʿ ānī*]. You must not drink from her breast. You must not sleep in her bedroom. You must not be attracted to her on account of her charming beauty, the smooth softness of her skin, her fair complexion, her delightful way of speaking, and the sweet taste of her food. That food of hers is poisonous. She is a deadly cunning sorceress, a tormentor. She does not represent the abode of perpetuity and permanent residence. Just look at what became of those who went along with her in times gone by, and see how she dealt with them! Do not kill yourselves in the endeavor to get more and more from her, for she will never grant you more than what is due to you from her resources. Give up the quest for surplus, which can only result in loss. Calm down, take the course of moderation, and be satisfied.

<sup>291</sup> In Arabic, the words *ad-dunyā* [this world] and *al-ākḥira* [the hereafter] are grammatically feminine. This makes it easy for an Arabic speaker or writer to personify them as female beings, if he wishes to represent them as characters in a parable, rather than as abstract entities.

Say: “Allāh (Exalted is He) has spoken true, and His Messenger (Allāh bless him and give him peace) has confirmed the truth of His word.”<sup>292</sup>

As he has told us:

Your Lord has finished the work of creation [*khalq*], providence [*rizq*] and timing [*ajal*]. The Pen has run dry on what is to be until the Day of Resurrection.<sup>293</sup>

The Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) has also told us:

As soon as Allāh had created the Pen, He said: “[Let your ink] flow!” The Pen said: “What shall I set down in ink?” He said (Exalted is He): “Set down the record of My decree concerning My creation until the Day of Resurrection.”<sup>294</sup>

If only you would remember death, your lower self [*nafs*] would have no say with you, and it would not object to going along with you in obedience to your Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He). As it is, however, you have treated that lower self of yours as your commander, and as a passenger who uses you as a means of transport. You do not like to make it suffer pain and discomfort by remembering death. You are unwilling to resist it and to confront it with the fact of death. It is leading you toward the Fire of Hell, and you have nothing good at your disposal.

O slave of the lower self [*nafs*], of natural inclination [*ṭabʿ*] and of passionate desire [*hawāʾ*]! You have departed from the lineage [*nisba*] of your father Adam (blessing and peace be upon him)<sup>295</sup> and lost your relationship to him. If you could see your own lower self as the righteous [*ṣālihūn*] see their lower selves [*nufūs*], you would try to escape from it. Woe unto you! The riding beast has loaded its saddle and all its burdens on top of you. It is now riding you, and you are carrying it around from place to place. As for the saints [*awliyāʾ*] of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), they have treated their lower selves as their camels, as the means of transport for the burdens of dedicated struggle [*mujāhada*] and the formal requirements of religious worship [*ʾibāda*]. They have made them serve as their riding mounts, and have sat upon them on the cushion of safety [*salāma*].

<sup>292</sup> ṣadaqa ʾllāhu (taʾālā) wa saddaqa Rasūluhu (ṣalla ʾllāhu ʾalāibī wa sallam) qawlab.

<sup>293</sup> jaffa ʾl-qalamu bi-mā huwa kāʾinun ilā yawmi ʾl-qiyaṃa.

<sup>294</sup> mā khalaqa ʾllāhu ʾl-qalama qāla ʾjri—qāla bi-mā ajrī—qāla (taʾālā) ʾjri bi-ḥukmī fi khalqī ilā yawmi ʾl-qiyaṃa.

<sup>295</sup> In other words, you can no longer be called a human being [*ādami*]. As an element in a person's name, the *nisba* is an adjective—ending in <-ī>—denoting relationship to an ancestor, father, mother, tribe, town or district, art or trade, etc.



Without a shadow of doubt, there are some for whom both this world and the hereafter have come to be at their service, standing before them at the ready, prepared to accept their commands and prohibitions. Such people will receive their allotted shares [of the good things of both worlds] in full measure, eventually [*ājilan*] in the case of the hereafter, and immediately [*‘ājilan*] in the case of this world.

O you who are listening to this talk! It will be adduced as evidence against you on the Day of Resurrection [*Yawm al-Qiyāma*], if you fail to put it into practice, and as evidence in your favor, if you do indeed put it into practice. “If only you had listened and learned [from your attendance at these meetings],” you will be told. You are actually more often in attendance at the session [*majlis*] of passionate desire, sinful disobedience, and distortion of the truth, so your attendance is a futility with no validity, a torment with no reward, an evil with no good. You must repent and make amends for this kind of attendance. You must come here with the intention of deriving benefit, for then your attendance will indeed prove beneficial to you. I hope and pray that Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) will let you derive benefit from me, and that there will be a noticeable improvement in your hearts, your intentions and your purposes, in accordance with His words (Exalted is He):

You do not know, it may be that Allāh will afterward bring some new thing to pass. (65:1)<sup>296</sup>

You will surely stop misbehaving, and learn your lessons well!

O Allāh, bestow upon us the wakefulness of the vigilant, and grant us the treatment they deserve. Allow us to enter into their spiritual states, with everlasting pardon [*‘afw*], well-being [*‘āfiya*] and immunity [*mu’āfiāt*], in religion [*dīn*], in this world, and in the hereafter. O Allāh, bless us with the goodness of this day, and the goodness of every other day. Bless us with the goodness of those who are present, and the goodness of those who are absent. Dispel from us the wickedness of those who are present, and the wickedness of those who are absent. Bless us with the goodness of the worldly rulers [*salātīn*] to whom You have given authority in our land, and protect us from their wickedness. Protect us from the wickedness of the wicked, the deceitfulness of the morally corrupt, the evil of all Your servants and of Your tribulation, and the evil

<sup>296</sup> *lā tadri la’alla ‘llāba yuḥdithu ba’da dbālīka amrā.*

of every animal creature that You are grasping by its forelock.<sup>297</sup> You are on a straight path [*ṣirāṭ mustaqīm*].<sup>298</sup> Give the disobedient ones to those who are obedient, the ignorant ones to those who truly know [*‘arīfīn*], those who are absent from You to those who are present in Your company, those who are still seeking to those who have already acquired knowledge [*‘ālimīn*], those who have gone astray to those who are rightly guided. Āmīn.

You must evict from your hearts all counterparts [*addād*], peers [*andād*] and partners [*shurakā’*], for the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He) does not accept any partner, especially in the heart that is inside His house.

When they were little boys, al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusain (may Allāh bless them both) used to play in the presence of [their grandfather] the Messenger of Allāh (may Allāh bless him and give him peace), and he took great delight in the pair of them, to the point of doting on them completely. But then Gabriel (peace be upon him) came to him and said: “This one will be poisoned,<sup>299</sup> and this one will be slain.”<sup>300</sup> His purpose in telling him this was simply to remove them from his heart, and to convert his delight in them into sorrow on their account.

Allāh’s Messenger (Allāh bless him and give him peace) had to go through yet another experience of this nature, in connection with [his wife] ‘Ā’isha (may Allāh be well pleased with her). He used to prefer her above all others in his affection, but then she came to be involved in that notorious incident, the story of which is too well known to need repeating.<sup>301</sup> The result was that she became repugnant to him in his

<sup>297</sup> An allusion to Qur’ān 11:56:

There is not one animal creature, but He is grasping it by its forelock [*mā min dābbatin illā Huwa ākbidhun bi-nāṣiyatibā*].

<sup>298</sup> The actual words of the final sentence of Qur’ān 11:56 are:

Surely my Lord is on a straight path! [*inna Rabbi ‘alā ṣirāṭin mustaqīm*].

<sup>299</sup> Al-Ḥasan, the eldest son of Fāṭima and ‘Alī (may Allāh be well pleased with them all), was destined to die in the year A.H. 49, poisoned by his wife Ja’dā, who was suborned to commit the deed by the infamous Yazīd, son of Mu’āwiya.

<sup>300</sup> Al-Ḥusain, the second son of Fāṭima and ‘Alī (may Allāh be well pleased with them all), would be cruelly slain at Karbalā’ in the year A.H. 61, in his conflict with Yazīd.

<sup>301</sup> While the story was undoubtedly very familiar to the audience addressed by Shaikh ‘Abd al-Qādir (may Allāh be well pleased with him), it may need to be recounted for the benefit of some of our readers. The following is a brief outline:

‘Ā’isha (may Allāh be well pleased with her) rode in a litter, as she accompanied her husband the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) on one of his expeditions. At a certain halt she noticed that she had lost her necklace, so she set off alone to try and find it. The camel (Note continued on next page...)

heart, in spite of the fact that he knew, and knew for certain, that the pair of them [she and her escort] were completely innocent, and that she had been acquitted of all charges of infidelity.<sup>302</sup> This was because the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) understood the purpose intended by the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He) in that whole affair.

We may also recall what happened in the case of Jacob (peace be upon him), when he loved Joseph (peace be upon him) too much, and so came to be separated from his son. This kind of experience has in fact been shared by most of the Prophets [*anbiyā'*] and saints [*awliyā'*] (may the blessings and peace of Allāh be upon them all). The Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He) is very Jealous [*Ghayūr*] of anyone who is loved as only He deserves to be loved, so he rids their hearts of everything apart from Him.<sup>303</sup>

drivers did not realize that she had dismounted from her litter, and the caravan moved on without her. A young man called Ṣafwān found her wandering alone, so he gallantly escorted her back to the caravan, but this gave rise to scandalous accusations. The Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) consulted his son-in-law 'Alī (may Allāh be well pleased with him), who recommended divorce, but a Qur'ānic revelation was sent down to clear 'Ā'isha (may Allāh be well pleased with her) of the slanderous charges against her. This revelation established the rule of Islāmic law whereby accusations of adultery must be supported by the testimony of four impeccably upright witnesses to the very act of carnal conjunction ("the pen in the holder"). In the absence of four such witnesses, the accusers are liable to the same punishment—eighty lashes—for false accusation [*qadhf*].

<sup>302</sup> In the following passage from his work entitled *Sufficient Provision for Seekers of the Path of Truth* [*al-Gbunya li-Tālibi Ṭarīqi 'l-Haqq*], Shaikh 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī (may Allāh be well pleased with him) cites Qur'ānic verses in confirmation of the innocence of 'Ā'isha (may Allāh be well pleased with her):

We hold a good opinion of all the wives of the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace). We firmly believe that they are the Mothers of the Believers [*Ummahāt al-Mu'minīn*], and that 'Ā'isha (may Allāh be well pleased with her) is one of the most excellent women in the entire universe. Allāh (Exalted is He) has declared her completely innocent of the charges brought against her by the renegades, as we read [in the Qur'ān] and as people will go on reading until the Day of Judgment [*Yawm ad-Dīn*]. "They who spread the slander are a gang among you...." (23:11) "They are liars in the sight of Allāh." (23:13)

<sup>303</sup> It is interesting to compare the following very similar passage from the Forty-sixth Discourse of *The Sublime Revelation* [*al-Faṭḥ ar-Rabbānī*] (see p. 294 of the translation published by Al-Baz):

Woe unto you! You claim to love Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), but you love others besides Him. He is purity [*ṣafā'*], while all the rest is murky confusion [*kadār*], so if you muddy that purity with the love of others, He will be vexed with you. He will do to you what He did to His friend Abraham [*Ibrāhīm al-Khalīl*] and to Jacob (peace be upon them both). When each devoted part of his heart to his son, He inflicted trials on them both in connection with their offspring. Also our

You must make a practice of sincere devotion [*ikhhlās*]. You must perform your ritual prayer [*ṣalāt*] for His sake, not for the sake of His creatures. You must keep the fast for His sake, not for the sake of His creatures. You must live your lives in this world for the sake of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), not for the sake of His creatures, and not for the sake of your own lower selves [*nufūs*]. In all acts of worshipful obedience [*ṭā'āt*], you must be dedicated to Allāh, not to His creatures.

You will not be capable of performing righteous deeds [*ā' māl ṣāliha*], nor of sincere dedication [*ikhhlās*] in the performance thereof, unless you practice the curtailment of expectation [*qasr al-amal*]. You will not be capable of curtailment of expectation, however, unless you practice the remembrance of death [*dhikr al-mawt*]. You will also be incapable of remembering death, unless you make it your practice to contemplate the dilapidated burial sites, and to reflect on their inhabitants and what they used to be involved in. You must sit beside the crumbling tombs, saying to yourselves: "Once upon a time, those who lie buried here would be eating and drinking, having sexual intercourse, engaging in sport and play, and getting together for social purposes. What is their condition now? What benefit can they derive from all of that? What do they have at their disposal, apart from their righteous deeds?"

In your midst, O people of this city [of Baghdād], there are some who do not profess the [fundamental Islamic] doctrine of *al-bā' th wa 'n-nushūr* [the raising and revival of the dead on the Day of Resurrection]. They are adherents of the school of thought [*madhhab*] known as *ad-Dabriyya* [atheistic materialism],<sup>304</sup> and they keep themselves in hiding for fear of being put to death. I am well aware of a particular group of them, [so I could

Prophet Muḥammad (Allāh bless him and give him peace)—when he became attached to his daughter's two sons, al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusain, Gabriel (peace be upon him) came to him and said: "Do you love the two of them?" "Yes," he replied, so Gabriel told him: "As for one of the pair, he will be given poison to drink, and as for the other, he will be slain." They therefore went out of his heart, as he emptied it for his Master (Almighty and Glorious is He), and his delight in his two grandsons turned into sadness over them. The Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He) is very Jealous [*Ghayūr*] of the hearts of His Prophets [*anbiyā'*], His saints [*awliyā'*] and His righteous servants [*'ibād ṣāliḥūn*].

<sup>304</sup> The term *ad-Dabriyya* is derived from the Arabic word *dabr* [time, especially in the sense of Time without end]. The original reference to those who profess this doctrine is in the following verse [*āya*] of the Qur'ān:

And they say: "There is nothing but our life in this world; we die, and we live, and nothing but Time can destroy us." [*wa qālū mā biya illā ḥayātuna 'd-dunyā—namūtu wa nahyā wa mā yubliḱunā illā 'd-dabr*]. (45:24)

denounce them] were it not for the fact that I am careful to treat you in accordance with the legal ruling [*ḥukm*] of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), while I protect you from exposure for the sake of the knowledge [*‘ilm*] of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He). I treat you all as one, and turn a blind eye toward you. O Allāh, [grant us] protection from exposure, and [grant us] pardon, and guidance, and sufficiency!

Woe unto you! Do not be such an idiot! It is because of your stupidity that you quarrel with Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) and try to argue with Him, so you are gambling with the most important part of the external aspect [*ẓāhir*] of your religion [*dīn*]. You must learn to close your eyes and lower your head in silence. You must learn to be well behaved. You must recognize your own true worth, acknowledge who you are, and be humbly modest about yourself. You are a slave [*‘abd*], and the slave, along with all that he possesses, belongs to his master [*mawlā*], not to himself. It is incumbent upon him to set aside his own wishes in favor of his master’s wish [*irāda*], and to report what his master has to say, rather than expressing his own opinion.

When you are shameless to the point of impudence in appealing to Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), it is purely for the sake of promoting your own selfish interest. The people [of the Lord] may also go to importunate lengths in appealing to their Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He), but in their case it is only for the sake of their fellow creatures. It is on behalf of their fellow creatures that they address their requests to Him, and it is for their sake that they keep pressing those requests upon Him with such urgent insistence. They are able to be so unselfish because they are the ones who have already said goodbye to the realm of creation. They have purified their hearts of all attachment to the realm of creation. Not so much as a single atom of the realm of creation is left inside their hearts. They enjoy a state of perpetuity in His company, belonging to Him, and wholly sustained by Him. They are in a state of total expansion [*bast*] with no contraction [*qabd*], of total exaltation with no humiliation, of total receiving with no deprivation, of total fulfillment with no withholding, of total acceptance with no rejection, of total gladness with no inhibition, of strength with no weakness, of bliss with no affliction. They have donned the robes of nobility, and into the hands of their hearts He has delivered the document conferring the delegation of authority [*tafiwīd*], enablement [*tamkīn*], and creative power [*takwīn*]. In their hands, creative power has

come to be a treasure that can never be exhausted, and a well that can never run dry. Whenever they feel afraid, He increases their sense of security. Whenever they lag behind, He advances them to the fore. Whatever they may have to say, their words are sure to be heard, and any intercession [*shafā'a*] on their part is sure to be accepted. He has delegated to them the dominion of this world and the hereafter, beyond the comprehension of their fellow creatures. They are hailed as great in the Kingdom of Heaven [*Malakūt*].

The Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) is reported as having said:

If someone acquires knowledge and puts it into practice, that person will be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven.<sup>305</sup>

You must reflect on what you are involved in, and on where it is likely to lead you. Then, if you see that it is indeed in conformity with the good pleasure of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), you should stick to your pattern of behavior. If, however, you come to see that it is actually at variance with His good pleasure, then you must stop and make a fresh start. You must apply a standard of pious restraint in deciding what to eat and drink, when to have sexual intercourse, when to remain silent and when to speak out, when to be active and when to take a rest.

You must not draw attention to any good point you have to your credit. If someone else lets you know about it, you will be accorded the praise that is due, but if you take it upon yourself to tell other people about it, you will be subject to criticism, for good manners require that the person who tells should be someone other than you, not you yourself.

There we see one of the righteous [*ṣāliḥīn*], sitting in his hermit's cell [*ṣawmā'a*] by the shore, maintaining a vigilant state of worshipful devotion. His head is absorbed into his innermost being [*sirr*], as he seeks the intimate friendship of his Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He) through remembrance of Him. Along comes a passerby, a righteous individual, maybe a human being, or perhaps one of the jinn or the angels, who says to him: "May Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) bestow His grace upon you! May He let you enjoy His intimate friendship, and may He bless you with His remembrance, O you have been so purified, O you who have been so preferred, O you who are so devout, O you who have so much to tell, O you who are so sincerely devoted, O you who have been so richly blessed!" But he does not raise his head to look at this passerby, nor does he pay attention with his heart

<sup>305</sup> *man ta'allama 'ilman wa 'amila bibi du'iya fī malakūti 's-samā'i 'azīmā.*

to the words he hears him speak. Such people could make it their full-time business to listen to the likes of this, time and time again. As it is, he shows no sign of having heard what was said to him, on this or on similar occasions.

If one of these [people of the Lord] does go back to share the life of his fellow creatures, he will do so in the capacity of a physician, in order to provide them with treatment in the hospital of this world. His medications will be beneficial and efficacious. His ointment [*kubl*] will stem the flow of tears from the eyes of their hearts, and he will cure the sicknesses that ail them. He will be a healer by means of whom good health can be restored, one who is so alive that life can be revived through him, a light so bright that he can be a source of illumination, a kind of food so that hunger can be satisfied through him, a kind of drink so that thirst can be quenched through him, an intercessor so persuasive that his intercession will always be accepted, a speaker so effective that his words will always be well received, a commander who commands in such a way that his orders will always be obeyed, and who forbids in such a way that his prohibitions will always be respected.

The people [of the Lord] keep the contents of their hearts concealed. They conceal their spiritual experiences [*ma' ārif*] and their many kinds of knowledge [*'ulūm*]. The doors of their hearts can be opened as entrances to the abode of nearness to their Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He), by night and by day, and they always have access to the guesthouse of hearts. By night and by day, their hearts are constantly attentive, attuned to receive the indications of the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He).

When the heart is truly sound, it is capable of prevailing over everything. It can be the instrument of salvation, subduing all the serpents like the staff of Moses (blessing and peace be upon him), in which the serpents were all swallowed up for his benefit.<sup>306</sup> Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) made it perform a miracle [*mu' jiza*] in the sight of his fellow creatures, in order to strengthen and confirm his Prophethood [*nubuwwa*]. It thereby rescued him from that particularly grave predicament,<sup>307</sup> as well as serving him in many other ways.

<sup>306</sup> For the sake of clarity, the following sentences have been removed from the main text, and are presented here as a footnote:

It is said that Gabriel (blessing and peace be upon him) plucked that staff from one of the plants in the Garden of Paradise, and that he handed it over to Moses (blessing and peace be upon him) when the latter needed to escape the clutches of Pharaoh. It has also been said that Jacob (blessing and peace be upon him) entrusted it to the care of someone who would pass it on down to him [to Moses (blessing and peace be upon him)].



Whenever Moses (blessing and peace be upon him) became weary and exhausted, his staff would carry him as if it were a riding animal. When he came up against an insurmountable obstacle, it would turn into a bridge by which he could cross over to the other side. If an enemy of his appeared on the scene, it would confront the foe on his behalf.

There came a day when Moses (blessing and peace be upon him) was shepherding the sheep and goats in a desolate area, far from any habitation. He was all alone, with no friendly companion other than his Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He). Sleep overcame him for a while, and then, when he woke up, he noticed a trace of blood on the tip of his staff. This prompted him to make a thorough search of his surroundings, and he eventually caught sight of an enormous snake, which had been killed. He thereupon gave thanks to Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) for the fact that it had been prevented from doing him harm.

Whenever Moses (blessing and peace be upon him) became hungry, his staff would turn at once into a tree, which would then produce enough fruit for him to eat until he felt quite satisfied, and whenever the heat of the sun became too painfully intense for him to bear, he had only to set it by his side and then bask in its shade.

Such is the experience of the servant [of the Lord]. When his heart is truly sound, and he has come to be worthy of his Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He), He endows him with features that are beneficial to people in general, as well as to him in particular. The benefit is thus both personal and universal. That which is outwardly apparent is for the sake of his fellow creatures, while that which is hidden within is for his own sake. The public aspect is for the people at large, while the private aspect is for him.

The first stage of this whole business is [the essential declaration of the Islāmic faith]: “There is none worthy of worship except Allāh—Muḥammad is Allāh’s Messenger [*Lā ilāha illa ’llāh—Muḥammadur Rasūlu’llāh*].” Its final stage is equal indifference to praise and blame, good and bad, advantage and disadvantage, acceptance and rejection, popularity and unpopularity. The first step must be authentic, for only then can the second be genuinely established. If you have never placed your foot firmly on the first rung of the ladder, how can you climb up to

<sup>307</sup> Referring to the story told in the Qur’ān (7:104-22), of how Moses (peace be upon him) was challenged by Pharaoh and his sorcerers, after he had declared: “O Pharaoh, I am a Messenger from the Lord of the Worlds....”



the second? Actions are judged according to their final results [*al-ʿā mālu bi-khawātīmihā*]. Your statement that “There is none worthy of worship except Allāh. Muḥammad is Allāh’s Messenger [*Lā ilāha illa ʿllāh—Muḥammadur Rasūluʿllāh*]” is an allegation, so where is the evidence to prove it? That evidence must be the affirmation of Divine Unity [*tawḥīd*], and sincere devotion [*ikhlāṣ*], together with having a thorough respect for the law [*ihkām al-ḥukm*] and giving it its proper due.

Someone who affirms the Divine Unity [*muwāḥḥid*] may not keep any goods that have been acquired from either the political ruler [*sultān*] or the devil [*shaitān*]. He must be completely detached. Residing with his heart in the company of his Lord, he sees how things are managed by the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He), and observes His workings in himself and in his fellow creatures. He sees how fate [*qadāʾ*] and destiny [*qadar*], those two leaves of a single door, swing open and show what lies behind them. He watches his fellow creatures with the eye of incompetence and weakness, sickness and poverty, humiliation and death. He has neither friend nor foe, no one to pray for him, and no one to curse him. If his Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He) tells him to pronounce a curse against someone, he duly curses that person, and if He tells him to offer a prayer for someone, he duly prays for the person concerned. He is under the command and prohibition [of his Lord]. His heart has been admitted into the company of the angels, concerning whom Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) has said:

They do not disobey Allāh in that which He commands them, but do what they are commanded. (66:6)<sup>308</sup>

He speaks in the same way as all the limbs and organs of his body will speak on the Day of Resurrection [*Yawm al-Qiyāma*], so if such people are chastised by one of their own kind, they say: “Allāh has caused us to speak, He who has caused every single thing to speak.” Once he has attained to this station, this servant becomes extinct in terms of his personal identity [*fāniyan ʿanh*], existing [*mawjūd*] only by virtue of his Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He).

O Allāh, may our prayer of supplication [*duʿāʾ*] be one that is fit to be addressed to You, and:

Give us in this world good, and good in the hereafter, and guard us against the torment of the fire! (2:201)<sup>309</sup>

<sup>308</sup> *lā yaʿsūna ʿllāha mā amarabum wa yafʿalūna mā yuʾmarūn.*

<sup>309</sup> *ātina fī ʿd-dunyā ḥasanatan wa fī ʿl-ākbarati ḥasanatan wa qina ʿadbāba ʿn-nār.*

## The Forty-second Discourse

**T**he Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) is reported as having said:

Woe unto any man who would leave his dependents behind with something good, but would go to meet his Lord with something bad.

I notice that most of you are this way inclined. You accumulate dirhams and dīnārs [coins of silver and gold] with a hand that is not the hand of pious restraint [*warāʿ*], then you leave them behind for your wife and children to inherit. You pass them on to them, and they will have to face the reckoning, while happiness will be enjoyed by others. Grief and sorrow will be theirs, while pleasure and delight will be for others to enjoy.

O you who are going to leave the possessions of this world behind for others to inherit, you must pay attention to the words of your Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace). Do not leave them with an inheritance that is unlawful [*ḥarām*], and then set off to meet Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) in the company of evil, torment and chastisement. The hypocrite [*munāfiq*] commits his children to the care of the wealth which he leaves behind for them to inherit, while the true believer [*muʾmin*] commits his children to the care of his Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He). Even if he had created this world and all that it contains, the true believer would not commit his offspring to the care of that which he had created. He knows all too well, from the test of personal experience, that many of his fellow human beings have committed their children to the care of the money and property they left behind for them to inherit. Then, once their parents had passed away, those children became so poor that they had to beg from other people. The blessing was removed from the wealth which their parents had left them. The blessing was removed from it because it had been accumulated in the first place with a hand that was not the hand of pious restraint [*warāʿ*],

and because their parents had so confidently relied upon it. They had committed their children to the care of the wealth which they left for them to inherit, and had quite forgotten their Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He).

The hypocrite [*munāfiq*] is the slave of his fellow creatures, the petty servant of dirhams and dinārs [coins of silver and gold], the petty servant of worldly power and strength and of those who wield it. He is the slave of the wealthy, of kings and potentates, of all those who are hostile toward anyone who tries to summon them to their Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He), toward anyone who could show them the path to His door and then open it to let them see inside.

As for the true believers [*mu'minūn*], they remain steadfast in their loyal devotion to their Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He) through misery and woe, through hardship and prosperity, through blessings and afflictions, in good health and in sickness, in poverty and in affluence, when their fellow creatures accept them and when they turn their backs. In whatever circumstances they may happen to be, they never part company with Him as far as their hearts are concerned, not for a single instant. They are always surrendered to His will [*muslimīn*], obediently submissive [*mustaslimīn*], calm in their feelings [*mustarīḥīn*], content [*rāḍīn*] and ever ready to comply with His wishes [*muwāfiqīn*]. They have abandoned argumentative resistance, and have become strangers to it, to the extent that nothing suits them now except obedience to the [divine] command and prohibition.

You must consult the Book of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) and the Sunna of His Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) in connection with all your affairs and undertakings [*taṣārīf*]. If you happen to come up against some problem with regard to your religion [*dīn*], you should ask: “What do you have to say about it, O Book? What do you have to say about it, O Sunna? What do you have to say about it, O Messenger [*Rasūl*] of Allāh, you who have shown me the way to the Sender [*Mursil*]?” If you do this, your problem will be resolved and the darkness of your confusion will be dispelled.

When something poses a problem as far as you are concerned, you should turn for advice on the subject, either outwardly to those who have legal qualifications [*ahl al-ḥukm*] or inwardly to your heart. This is why

the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) once said to a certain righteous man:

Seek a ruling from your heart and the movement you experience within it, even if the legal experts offer you their considered opinions.<sup>310</sup>

You should seek a ruling [in this manner], and then proceed to deal with people accordingly, even if they offer you their considered opinions. Surely you do not mean to tell me that you cannot still come to conclusions of your own, in spite of the fact that you have consulted the legal experts? You must let the chamberlains and gatekeepers [of the King's palace] see what you really feel in your heart, then enter into the presence of the King and find out what He has to say about it. If He is in agreement with you, well, congratulations on the harmonious outcome! If He does not agree with you, on the other hand, you must accept His word and not what anyone else may try to tell you.

You must become detached from the ownership of property [*milk*], if you really wish to enjoy perpetual friendship with the Owner [*Mālik*]. Property is a barrier that screens one from the Owner, just as the benefit [*ni'ma*] is a barrier that screens one from the Benefactor [*Mun'im*]. Undue preoccupation with our trials and tribulations [*balā'*] can also become a barrier that screens us from the One who inflicts those trials and tribulations [*Mubtālī*]. Attachment to the products of creation, to things that have been brought into being and then fashioned and formed, is a tie that restricts the freedom of our hearts, our innermost beings [*asrār*] and our spiritual contents [*ma'ānī*].

When Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) wishes someone to receive very much that is good, He ropes him in and makes him stand before Him on the feet of his heart. He causes him to grow a pair of wings, on which he proceeds to fly through the air of His knowledge [*'ilm*]. Then he heads for shelter on the isthmus [*barzakh*] of His nearness. At this point, however, he may be stricken with fear, lose his sense of direction, and acquire a misguided notion of what is happening to him, in which case the hand of [divine] jealousy will come to the rescue. If it clips his wing, and so prevents him from obtaining direct experience [*ma'rifa*] after he had begun to learn by such experience, he will at least be saved from the danger of causing his own destruction.

<sup>310</sup> *istafiti qalbaka wa mā yataḥarraku fībi wa-in aṭāka 'l-muftīn.*

As long as the servant [of the Lord] remains in this world, he must inevitably experience fear and the loss of his cherished illusions. Even if he were to attain to some position of importance, he would arrive there only because this world is the abode of change and substitution, whereas the hereafter is the abode of permanent residence, in which there is neither change nor substitution. Woe unto you! You claim that your heart has arrived at its destination, when in actual fact it is shackled with ball and chain, and imprisoned behind doors and locks. Go and pass off your counterfeit coin on somebody else! It will not do you one bit of good with me. If you have been coming here in the hope that I might eventually accept your counterfeit coin, you may as well stop coming, because you are wasting your time and energy, and I shall never accept that rubbish from you. If, on the other hand, you have been coming here to see if I would take your gold, while separating out the yellow brass, the silver, and the diamond stones, surely you must know by now that the people [of the Lord] are professional money changers [*ṣayārifa*], who are used to assaying the gold coins of religion [*danānīr ad-dīn*] and distinguishing between the good and the bad, between what belongs to Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) and what belongs to their fellow creatures. The people [of the Lord] are ambassadors [*sufarā'*], saints [*awliyā'*], physicians [*aṭibbā'*], agents [*'ummāl*] and experts [*jahābidha*], and they are all devoutly committed to the service of their Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He).

O my people! You must answer the call of your Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He). You must make His creatures love Him. You must answer Him yourselves, and you must also guide your fellow creatures toward Him, so that they will eventually join with you in responding to His call. You must remind those who are forgetful of Him. Remind them of the blessings He has bestowed upon them, so that they will come to love Him. Allāh the Exalted (Almighty and Glorious is He) conveyed [*awḥā*] these words to David (blessings and peace be upon him) by way of inspiration:

O David, you must make My creatures love Me.<sup>311</sup>

He said this even though His knowledge of His love for whomever He wishes has existed from the beginning of time, as His knowledge of those who will love Him has existed from the beginning of time. His purpose,

<sup>311</sup> *yā Dāwūda ḥabbibnī ilā khalqī.*

in commanding David (blessings and peace be upon him) to make His creatures love Him, must therefore be to make that infinitely pre-existing knowledge [*‘ilm qadīm*] manifest to you.

If you are inside a house that is shrouded in darkness, but you happen to be carrying a fire iron and a flint, and you rub the two together, you will surely strike a spark and light a fire. The spark has been inside the fire iron from time immemorial, but it was only brought to light by the action of striking it with the flint. It is just like this in the case of the obligations imposed by the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He), for they cause His infinitely pre-existing knowledge [*‘ilm qadīm*] to become manifest and clearly apparent within the realm of creation. The [divine] command and prohibition have the effect of showing up the difference between the righteous servant and the disobedient servant. They show up the difference between the good debtor who always pays his dues and the bad debtor who always defaults. Even in ancient times, the righteous were few and far between, and today they are the very fewest of the few.

The true believer [*mu’min*] loves Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) even if He afflicts him with trials and tribulations, even if He allows him very little in the way of food and drink, clothing, social status, health and well-being, and popularity with his fellow creatures. Far from trying to escape by running away from His door, he uses its threshold as a pillow on which to rest his head. He does not feel estranged from Him, and he makes no protest when He gives presents to others and nothing to him. If He does give him something, he is grateful, and if He refrains from giving, he is patient. His desired goal is not the receiving of gifts. His desired goal is the sight of Him, to enjoy nearness to Him and be able to enter into His presence.

O you liars! The truly honest person [*ṣādiq*] does not retreat. The truly honest person has no back. He knows the meaning of “to the fore” but not the meaning of “to the rear”. He has honesty with not a trace of falsehood. In word, in deed, and in any claim he makes, he is always true to his conscious intention [*niyya*]. Far from turning away and fleeing from the arrows aimed at him by his Beloved, he welcomes them as they strike his breast. Your love of some material object is making you blind and deaf. When someone really knows what he is looking for, he no

longer attaches any importance to the price he has to pay. The genuine lover [*muḥibb ṣādiq*] is always defying grave dangers in the quest for his Beloved. If a blazing inferno stood in his path, he would plunge right into it. He charges head first into situations that others would not have the courage to tackle. His genuine sincerity [*ṣidq*] lets him hurl himself forward into the midst of such trials and tribulations.

What will serve to make the difference between the honest person and the liar really plain and clear? Well, it has been excellently stated by a certain righteous man, who said: “It is under conditions of annoyance and displeasure, not those of approval and contentment, that the lover is clearly distinguishable from the hater.”

Trials and tribulations, disasters and misfortunes, these are the conditions under which faith [*īmān*] is clearly demonstrated. Spiritual experience [*maʿ rifa*] and knowledge [*ʿ ilm*] can make plain the difference between the inner kernel [*lubb*] and the outer shell [*qisr*]. The kernel resides in harmony and compliance, while the shell is to be found in discord and contention. When a person is harmoniously compliant [*muwāfiq*] with the wishes of his Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He), he peels the layer of creation from his heart, leaving a kernel without a shell.

When someone has grown strong in his affirmation of Divine Unity [*tawḥīd*], his trust in the Lord [*tawakkul*], and his ability to see with the eye of certainty [*ʿ ain al-yaqīn*], he will never turn back and desert the path of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), nor will he ever flee from His door. He will always be steadfast in his commitment to honesty [*ṣidq*] and integrity [*istiḳāma*]. As for those who love their Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He), they dearly wish that they did not have to see or be seen in this world or the hereafter, not by their fellow human beings, not by the jinn, and not even by the angels. They wish they could not see anyone with their own eyes, and that no other eyes could see them. Their case is like that of the lover who, having found an opportunity to be alone together with his loved one, would prefer to be unobserved by the very walls of the private chamber, let alone by the womenfolk of the household. He certainly does not want to be seen by the lady’s maid [*māshiṭa*] or the mother of the family. So it is with those who love their Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He), for they love Him to the exclusion of all others. They wish to behold His countenance, to the exclusion of

both this world and the hereafter, to the exclusion of gifts and presents, of compliments and praise.

A person like this, however, is the rarest of the rare. As far as all of you are concerned, the objects of your love are your own lower selves [*anfus*], your carnal desires and your sensual pleasures, and His countenance is therefore concealed from you as if behind a veil. This means that you will not achieve salvation, and that you will not behold the countenance of the nearness of your Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He). You are so seldom interested in anything but food and drink, clothes, and sexual experience. These are your most frequent subjects of conversation, even when you spend some time in your mosques [*masājīd*], which ought to be the homes of your remembrance [*dhikr*] of the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He). The mosques are delighted with those who remember Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), and they are disgusted with those who remember anyone other than Him.

You are so often afraid of hunger and poverty. If only you had a sense of certainty [*yaqīn*], your thoughts would not be so preoccupied with things of this kind. You should be devoted to your Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He), ever ready to comply with His will [*irāda*]. If He makes you suffer hunger, you must endure it patiently, with a good feeling in your hearts, and if He satisfies your hunger, you must express your gratitude to Him. He is far more Aware [*A'raf*] of your best interests. Stinginess and paltriness are completely foreign to Him. Let me recount the traditional story of the seventy Prophets (blessings and peace be upon them all), who lie buried [near the Ka'ba in Mecca] between the spot called *al-Multazam*<sup>312</sup> and the Station of Abraham [*Maqām Ibrāhīm*].<sup>313</sup>

<sup>312</sup> The spot called *al-Multazam* [lit. "that which is clung to"] is the space between the Black Stone [*al-ḥajar al-aswad*] and the door of the Ka'ba. The performance of ritual prayer [*ṣalāt*] directly in front of this area (or facing this spot from any part of the Sanctuary Mosque) constitutes one of the stations of the Pilgrimage [*Ḥajj*].

<sup>313</sup> The Station of Abraham [*Maqām Ibrāhīm*] is mentioned twice in the Qur'ān:

In it [the Meccan Sanctuary] there are evident signs, [one of them being] the Station of Abraham [*fībi āyātun bayyinātun Maqāmu Ibrāhīm*]. (3:97)

And take the Station of Abraham as a place of prayer [*wa 'itakbidbū min Maqāmi Ibrāhīma muṣallā*]. (2:125)

At a spot within a few yards of the corner of the Ka'ba in which the Black Stone is embedded, there is a small kiosk which contains the indentation of a footprint. According to Islāmic tradition, this is the footprint of Abraham, impressed into the rock while he and Ishmael [Ismā'il] were building the Ka'ba. The rites of Pilgrimage [*Ḥajj*] include the performance of a ritual prayer of two cycles [*rak'atain*] in the vicinity of the Station of Abraham [*Maqām Ibrāhīm*].



They were killed by hunger and lice [*qaml*], but not because He did not have within His kingdom the means to satisfy their hunger. It was rather that He chose to do it that way, and that He saw it as most appropriate for them. In treating them like that, He was actually demonstrating the high esteem in which He held them. The point was not that He did not value their worth, but rather that He viewed this world as quite insignificant.

This story may help to explain what the servant [of the Lord] is likely to experience when he wishes for Him, and Him alone, to the exclusion of all the products of creation, for He will extinguish that servant's self-will, and draw a veil between him and all things, so that the fire of his natural urges [*tab'*] will abate and subside. His spirit [*rūh*] will then become free of attachment to this world, and he will yearn for the hereafter, where he looks forward to meeting his Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He). Thus he will long for death, so that he can be alone with his Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He).

This description fits the most probable case, the one that is most likely to be encountered. As for the rare exceptions, they are a very few individuals out of all His creatures. Or, to put it somewhat differently, they are extraordinary cases, singled out for some special function, which will be made known to their fellow creatures in due course. Their role assigned to them is one of friendly guardianship [*ṣuḥba*], deputyship [*niyāba*], ambassadorship [*sifāra*], and the task of guiding His creatures toward Him, under their protection. In the East and in the West, on land and at sea, they will address their fellow creatures in their own tongues. He has made them His deputies [*nuwwāb*], so they wish for neither life nor death, for they are so totally absorbed in Him that they no longer have any will of their own. Their personal will [*irāda*] has died, their lower selves [*nufūs*] have become tame and tranquil, their passions [*ahwiya*] have been broken, the fires of their unrefined natures [*ṭabā'i'*] have subsided, they have become immune to the influence of their devils [*shayātīn*], and this world has become so subservient to them that it no longer has any control over them. It goes without saying, of course, that anyone to whom this applies must be the very rarest of the rare, the prince of all the tribes [*ra' i 'l-'ashā' ir*], the beloved of the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He) and the dearest to Him of all His creatures.

O my people! If you are not lovers [of the Lord], you must serve those who are His lovers. You must draw close to those who are His lovers. You must love His lovers. You must think well of His lovers.

**A**t this point someone asked: “Do you see love [*maḥabba*] as being experienced in the first instance because of an involuntary compulsion [*iḍṭirāran*], or by an act of free choice [*ikhtiṣārān*]?”

By way of reply, the Shaikh (may Allāh be well pleased with him) went on to say:

In the case of a few isolated individuals, the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He) simply casts His gaze upon them and He loves them. He shifts them from one thing to another in a single instant. He does not come to love them gradually, more and more as the years go by. He loves them in a single moment, so they love Him too, of necessity. They notice that all the blessings they have received have come from Him, not from any other. They notice all His kindness and tender loving care, and all the gifts He bestows upon them, so they love Him promptly and immediately, without any gradual process or passage of time.

In the case of the vast majority, however, it is a matter of choice. Lovers begin to choose Allāh (Exalted is He) in preference to His creatures, then they start choosing Him in preference not only to this world, but also to the hereafter. They start giving up things that are either strictly unlawful [*ḥarām*] or merely of dubious legality [*shubḥa*], then they cut back on their consumption of things that are lawful [*ḥalāl*]. They prefer to lead a very simple life, making do with basic things that are readily available. They shun bed and blankets, sleep and rest.

Their sides shun their couches [as they call on their Lord in fear and hope]. (32:16)<sup>314</sup>

Their night is no longer an ordinary night, and their day is no longer an ordinary day. They say: “Our God [*Ilāhanā*], we have left everything behind the backs of our hearts, and we have hastened toward You, so that You might be well pleased.” They journey toward Him on the feet of their hearts [*qulūb*], sometimes on the feet of their innermost beings [*asrār*], sometimes on the feet of their earnest intention [*irāda*], sometimes on the feet of their aspiration [*himma*], sometimes on the feet of their genuine sincerity [*ṣidq*], sometimes on the feet of their love [*ḥubb*],

<sup>314</sup> *tatajāfā junūbuhum ‘ani ‘l-maḍāji ‘i [yad ‘ūna Rabbahum kbawfan wa ṭama’ā].*

sometimes on the feet of their ardent longing [*shawq*], sometimes on the feet of their meekness [*dhull*] and their modest humility [*tawāḍu'*], sometimes on the feet of their fear [*khawf*], sometimes on the feet of their hope [*rajā'*], and all of this out of love for Him and eager yearning to meet with Him.

In your own case, O questioner, you belong to the group consisting of those who love Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) both through involuntary compulsion [*iḍṭirāran*] and through a process of free choice [*ikhtiṣāran*]. So, since your question cannot be answered simply, either this way or that, you had better hold your tongue and concentrate on practicing Islām as it ought to be practiced!

If only you could experience all that Islām and faith [*īmān*] can mean! If only you would leave the company of the unbelievers [*kāfirīn*] and the hypocrites [*munāfiqīn*] today, and stay away from them tomorrow. If only you would get up and walk away from meetings held by those who idolize their fellow creatures and material means [*al-mushrikīn bi 'l-khalq wa 'l-asbāb*], and who quarrel with the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He)! You must repent and mend your ways. Do not meddle with the treasures of worldly kings, and do not pry into their secrets.

Shaikh Ḥammād<sup>315</sup> (may Allāh the Exalted be well pleased with him) would often say: “If a person does not acknowledge his own worth, the decrees of destiny will teach him to acknowledge his own worth [*man lam ya' raf qadrahū 'arrafat-hu 'l-aqdāru qadrah*].” To recognize your own worth is better than refusing to acknowledge your own worth, because an ignorant person is someone who knows neither his own worth nor the worth of other people.

O Allāh, do not include us among the ignorant, lying pretenders! O Allāh, include us among those of Your creatures who enjoy Your special favor, and:

Give us in this world good, and good in the hereafter, and guard us against the torment of the fire! (2:201)<sup>316</sup>

<sup>315</sup> Shaikh Abu 'l-Khair Ḥammād ad-Dabbās (may Allāh bestow His mercy upon him) was the saintly teacher who steered Shaikh 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jilānī (may Allāh be well pleased with him) toward deeper spiritual experience, after the latter had studied the traditional Islāmic sciences under various scholars in Baghdād, notably the prominent Ḥanbali jurist [*faqīh*], Abū Sa'd 'Alī al-Mukharriṁī.

<sup>316</sup> *ātina fī 'd-dunyā ḥasanatan wa fī 'l-ākhirati ḥasanatan wa qina 'adbāba 'n-nār.*

## The Forty-third Discourse

**H**ow little you have in you of the affirmation of Divine Unity [*tawḥīd*]! How little readiness to accept the will of Allāh (Exalted is He)! There is no illness except that which Allāh has willed,<sup>317</sup> so it is pointless to quarrel and wrangle with Him. You have so often been guilty of attributing partners to Allāh (Exalted is He), through your idolatrous worship [*shirk*] of the material means [*asbāb*] and of people who are mere creatures like yourselves. You have chosen to regard this person and that person as lords [*arbāb*], to the exclusion of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He). You treat them as if they could be the source of harm and benefit, as if they had the power to give and to withhold.

You must not go on behaving like this! You must turn again to your Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He). You must dedicate your hearts entirely to Him. You must turn to him in humble entreaty, and beg Him to supply you with everything you need. You must apply to Him for all your urgent requirements. You have no other place to turn. You have no other door by which to enter. All other doors have been locked shut. You must spend time alone with Him in lonely places. You must talk to Him and speak to Him directly with the tongues of your faith [*īmān*].

The following practice is one that should be adopted by each and every one amongst you: As soon as the other members of your family have all gone to sleep, and the sounds and voices of your fellow creatures have fallen silent, you should cleanse yourself by performing the ritual ablution, then lower your forehead to the ground. While you are in that humble posture, you should repent, beg pardon, confess your sins, implore your Lord to grant His gracious favor, and ask Him to supply your needs. You should also complain to Him about any problems that are causing a feeling of tightness in your breast. He is your Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He), not any other, and He is your God [*Ilāh*], not any other.

<sup>317</sup> *mā min dā'—illā mā shā'a 'llāh.*

Woe unto you! You must not run away on account of the arrows of His afflictions. He has treated all your predecessors in the same way, exposing them to pain and suffering, making them experience difficulty and hardship as well as ease and comfort, so that they might acknowledge Him and be grateful to Him, so that they might learn to be patient with Him and entrust themselves to His care.

Punishments are for the common folk [*al-‘uqūbāt li’l-‘awāmm*], while acts of atonement are for the truly devout believers [*al-kaffārāt li’l-mu’minīna ‘l-muttaqīn*], and spiritual degrees are for the righteous of true conviction, the triumphant champions of truth [*ad-darajāt li’š-šāliḥīna ‘l-mūqinīna ‘l-mu’ayyadīna ‘š-šiddīqīn*].

The Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) has told us:

Of all people, we Prophets are the ones most sorely afflicted. Then those who resemble us most closely, and so on down the scale.<sup>318</sup>

When the true believer [*mu’min*] is afflicted, he bears his affliction with patience. He keeps it well hidden from his fellow creatures and does not complain to them. This is why the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) has told us:

The believer wears his cheerfulness on his face, while his sadness stays inside his heart.

That is to say, he greets other people with a cheerful expression, so that they will not notice what is in his heart.

True believers hide the treasures of their inner beings [*bawāṭin*]. They act in accordance with the natural disposition [*sajjīyya*] of their hearts. Sadness is the natural disposition of our hearts, while fear is the natural disposition of our lower selves [*nufūs*]. Sadness is a cloud that showers the heart with drops of wisdom [*ḥikam*] and secret knowledge [*asrār*]. Why will you not be patient in bearing sadness and broken-heartedness, when Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) has said in one of His utterances:

I am with those whose hearts are broken on My account.

Whenever their hearts are broken because of remoteness [from Him], along comes the mender of nearness to mend them. Whenever they are alienated from their fellow creatures, along comes intimate friendship [*uns*] with Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) to put them at their ease.

<sup>318</sup> *naḥnu ma’sbaru ‘l-anbiyā’i ‘asbaddu ‘n-nāsi balā’an—thumma ‘l-amthalu fa’l-amthal.*

Whenever they become estranged from their fellow creatures, they discover intimate friendship in the nearness of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He). Whenever their sadness lasts for a long time in this world, their happiness is of long duration in the hereafter.

The Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) would often experience prolonged bouts of sadness, and he was always given to contemplation. He would seem to be listening carefully, as if to an invisible speaker who was talking to him, or to someone calling out to him from the unseen. His executors [*awṣiyā'*], his representatives [*khulafā'*], his deputies [*nuwwāb*] and his heirs [*wurrāth*] are likewise notable for the long duration of their sadness and the constancy of their contemplation. How could they fail to follow the example he set by his actions, when they are standing in his stead [*qā'imūn maqāmah*], feeding people with his food and quenching their thirst with his drink, using his horses for transport, and wielding his swords and his spears in battle?

The people [of the Lord] have inherited the situation of the Prophets [*anbiyā'*] (may the blessings and peace of Allāh be upon them all) and their position in the scheme of things, though not their personal names [*asmā'*] and titles [*alqāb*], nor the special attributes [*khaṣā'is*] and peculiar virtues [*faḍā'il*] with which they were endowed. The saints [*awliyā'*] and spiritual deputies [*abdāl*] are limited to a certain number, which they never exceed and of which they never fall short. It may therefore happen that one of them begins to play his rôle at a very early age, while in the case of another, his true rôle does not become apparent until the latter part of his life. Transformations are brought about through the presence of such an individual, for he is the friend [*walī*] of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) in the knowledge [*'ilm*] of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He).

Impeccable virtue [*'iṣma*] is not a prerequisite for spiritual deputyship [*badaliyya*] and sainthood [*wilāya*]. Impeccable virtue is one of the special attributes [*khaṣā'is*] of the Prophets (may the blessings and peace of Allāh be upon them all), and it has not survived beyond their time.<sup>319</sup>

<sup>319</sup> According to the classical Arabic lexicographers, '*iṣmatu 'l-anbiyā'*' signifies Allāh's preservation of the Prophets; first by the peculiar endowment of them with essential purity of constitution; then, by the conferring of large and highly-esteemed excellences; then, by aid against opponents, and rendering their feet firm; then, by sending down upon them tranquillity [*as-sakīna*: see Qur'ān 9:26] and the preservation of their hearts, and adaptation to that which is right. (See: E.W. Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, art. 'Ṣ-M.)

According to traditional report, the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) once said:

Whenever one of the friends of Allāh [*walī min awliyāʾ Allāh*] (Almighty and Glorious is He) is guilty of disobedience, the angels laugh, as they say to one another: “Just look at that friend of Allāh! See how he is committing a sinful act of disobedience!”

They do not express astonishment at his sinful disobedience [*maʿ ṣiya*], his unbelief [*kufṛ*], his remoteness [*buʿ d*] and his hypocrisy [*nifāq*], for they know full well that after a few days he will become a beloved friend [of the Lord], one who is drawn near [to Him], honored and purified, an intercessor, a guide, and an heir [to the Prophets].<sup>320</sup>

O hypocrite [*munāfiq*], it is no business of yours to be listening to this talk. Get out of here! You are the enemy of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) and the enemy of His Messengers [*rusul*], His Prophets [*anbiyāʾ*] and His saints (may the blessings and peace of Allāh be upon them all). Were it not for the sense of shame that I feel in the presence of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), I would come down and grab you by the scruff of your neck, and then I would throw you out of here. Everything that you are involved in is stupid fantasy.

O my people! You must put what you learn into practice, and you must do so with real sincerity. You must not be vain and conceited. You must not resent the fact that credit is due to your Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He) for deeds which He has helped you to perform. The conceited person is an ignorant person. The person who bears a grudge is an ignorant person. The person who adopts an attitude of arrogant pride toward his fellow creatures is an ignorant person. Modest humility is from the All-Merciful [*Raḥmān*], while arrogant pride is from the devil [*shaiṭān*]. The first to adopt an attitude of arrogant pride was Iblīs, so he was cursed, abominated and treated as an outcast. If it were not the case that self-abasement and modest humility constitute a high spiritual degree, Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) would not have attributed such qualities to those whom He loves and who love Him. As He has told us in His own words (Exalted is He):

O you who have believed, if one of you becomes a renegade from his religion, Allāh will surely bring [in his stead] a people whom He loves, and who love Him, humble toward the believers, disdainful toward the unbelievers. (5:54)<sup>321</sup>

<sup>320</sup> ... *waliyyan maḥbūban muqarraban mukarraman muṭabbaran shafīʿan dāllan wāriṭbā*.

<sup>321</sup> *yā ayyuha ʾlladhina āmanū man yartadda minkum ʿan dīnibi fa-sawfa yaʿti ʾllāhu bi-qawmin yuḥibbubum wa yuḥibbūnahu adbillatin ʿala ʾl-muʾminīna aʿizzatin ʿala ʾl-kāfirīna*.

The true believers [*mu'minūn*] are humble in their attitude and behavior toward their fellow believers, while they treat the unbelievers [*kāfirīn*] with disdain. Their humility toward their fellow believers is an aspect of religious worship [*ibāda*]. Far from adopting an attitude of arrogant pride toward his fellow creatures, the believer is modest and humble in his dealings with them. He conceals his true status by behaving with such modesty and humility. He is actually a close confidant of the king in his palace, so when he goes out and about, the king accompanies him in the guise of an attendant servant, so that none of his friends will be able to recognize him. Even the vizier [*wazīr*] cannot get away with treating him in a haughty manner, for he has only to dismiss him by saying with a smile: "The king is with me." Indeed, he can grin right in his face. As he goes about his business, he gives the impression that the person with him is just one of his attendant servants, and he takes great care to preserve his disguise and keep his true identity from being revealed.

You do not recognize the true condition of the people of the Lord, and you do not acknowledge the truth of what they have to say. Your involvement with worldly creatures is an obstacle that prevents you from getting to know them. Your love of prestige in this world, and the ambitious pursuit of political leadership, these are obstacles that prevent you from getting to know them. If you had been genuinely interested in trying to find them, you would have recognized them by now, and you would have derived complete satisfaction from what they had to tell you. Woe unto you! You do not spend any time in the company of people who put their knowledge into practice. You are not like those who drink what they have to offer, here in my presence, so you do not experience the effect of that kind of wine.

We know many who profess to be learned scholars, and yet, as far as actual practice is concerned, not one of them is any better than a common illiterate [*āmmī*]. Any scholar who fails to put his knowledge into practice deserves to be regarded as a common illiterate, even if he happens to have memorized all the subjects in the curriculum. The term applies to anyone who has no real awareness of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He). It applies to anyone who does not fear Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) and does not pin



all his hopes on Him. It applies to anyone who is not truly devoted to Him, in both his private and his public life.

The shape of your spiritual states is as clearly visible to me as that sun up there in the sky. You are not following the path of right guidance. You are callow youths, interested only in trying to satisfy your carnal appetites. You are the slaves of your fellow creatures. You are slaves to their giving and their withholding, slaves to their praise and their blame. Do not try to deceive me. There is no longer any room for doubt in my mind. The outside of the door and the inside of the door are one and the same from my point of view. Whatever is in your hearts, the outline of it can be seen on your faces, and its symptoms are there to be read.

Glory be to the One who has made me take my place here in front of you, and has set me the trying task of lecturing to you! I am quite detached from all of you, as I am detached from my own lower self [*nafs*] and my allotted portions of worldly goods [*aqsām*]. Fortunately for me, I am not interested in eating and drinking, dressing up, indulging in sexual activity, or putting on a show. Fortunately for me, I have been able to stand aside from you, and to learn what I needed to know through direct indication, rather than verbal communication [*bi'l-ishāra dūna 'l-maqāla*].

I feel disgust at the sight of hypocrites [*munāfiqīn*], rebellious sinners [*āṣīn*], and those who attribute partners to Allāh [*mushrikīn*], but I am not allowed to avoid them. They are sick people, and I have been charged with the task of initiating a course of treatment to cure their sickness. The simple believer [*mu'min*], being a novice in faith [*mubtadi' fi 'l-īmān*], is quite incapable of paying considerate attention to any of these types, and he cannot tolerate them for a single instant. If he happens to catch sight of a hypocrite, or a rebellious sinner, or someone who is guilty of attributing partners to Allāh, he will fly into a rage. He would even kill the offender, if it were in his power to do so. We have in fact heard of such a person (may the mercy of Allāh be upon him), who would become angry if he caught so much as a glimpse of an unbeliever [*kāfir*], and who would fall to the ground in a fit of rage if he had to go on looking at him for any length of time. This violent reaction of his was due to the intensity of his zeal for Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), and his extreme reluctance to accept the very idea that any servant of His might somehow fail to

believe in Him. There can be no doubt that this particular believer was a novice, because the earliest stage of faith is characterized by weakness, and the final stage by strength.

A certain righteous man (may the mercy of Allāh the Exalted be upon him) is reported as having said: “Only a person of mature spiritual experience [*‘ārīf*] is qualified to laugh in the face of the hypocrite [*munāfiq*].” He must be a man of many devices and highly refined skills, who possesses the necessary expertise to act as a physician, so he can smile in the hypocrite’s face as he tells him: “Look, I have the priceless medicine to cure you.” He must speak to him pleasantly, in order to win his confidence, and he must engage his attention until he feels at ease in his company. Then, when he is in a position to influence him sufficiently, he can proceed to treat his sickness. He will do this by introducing him to Islām and to faith [*īmān*], citing the traditional sources as he explains their true significance. He will introduce him to the words of his Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He), gently persuading him to become reconciled with Him. Thus, as the days go by, his unbelief [*kuf*] will gradually melt away, as will his hypocrisy and his sinful disobedience. The sickness of his heart will fade away, and he will become a reformed character. Both his external personality [*ẓāhir*] and his inner nature [*bāṭin*] will steadily improve, without any argument or quarreling, without any prodding or beating.

Jesus, the son of Mary, and John the Baptist [Yaḥyā ibn Zakariyyā<sup>322</sup>] (blessings and peace be upon them both) were traveling together in the desert. When the darkness of night spread its shroud upon them, John went to the village of the believers, while Jesus made his way to the village of the sinners. Because of the strength of his spiritual state, Jesus was moved to admonish and warn those transgressors, to take them by the hand and lead them to the door of their Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He). Whereas John wished to pray and fast among the believers, Jesus wished to summon people to the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He). In the case of someone who is spiritually aware [*‘ārīf*],

<sup>322</sup> John the Baptist is mentioned several times in the Qur’ān, where he is called Yaḥyā ibn Zakariyyā’. Sūra 19 opens with an account of his birth, which is also referred to in 21:89. In 3:34, he is said to have been sent with glad tidings “to confirm the Word from Allāh [Jesus], a chief and a chaste one and a Prophet from the righteous.” In 6:85, Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) has said:

And We guided...Zakariyyā’, and Yaḥyā, and Jesus, and Elias, all righteous ones.

remembrance [*tadhkār*] and worshipful service [*‘ibāda*] of the Lord are duly performed by summoning his fellow creatures to Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), so his relationship with Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) is always on this basis.

The simple Muslim is quite straightforward, and the simple believer [*mu’min*] is equally straightforward. When someone is spiritually aware [*‘ārīf*], however, his behavior becomes erratic, and when someone really knows [*‘ālim*] Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), he is awestruck and dumbfounded.

Woe unto you! You have yet to experience the real meaning of Islām, so how can you put yourself on this lofty pedestal, teaching and imparting knowledge to your fellow creatures? You had better get down from there at once, otherwise I shall knock you down so that you land right on your head.

Religions [*adyān*] are of various kinds. Faith [*īmān*] draws a distinction between the true and the false. It dismisses every hypocrite [*munāfiq*] from his position of authority, brings him down out of his pulpit, and makes him hold his tongue instead of lecturing to the people.

O all you creatures, I am quite independent of you, since all my needs are met by Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He). Wealth is at my disposal, even though I do not possess a single atom of this world. If one of my fellow creatures happens to give me a gift or grant me a favor, I accept that thing from the hand of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He). I regard the person’s claim to fame as silly nonsense, and I give thanks to my Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He) after He has bestowed His favor upon me. Whenever I give something to someone, I acknowledge the helpful intervention [*taawfiq*] of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), recognizing how He has caused His gift to be conveyed by my hand. Thus I acknowledge the fact that Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) is the Giver [*Mu’ṭī*], not I. He gives according to the quality of your aspiration [*himmā*], and according to the quality of your aspiration He withholds His gifts. This is why the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) has told us:

Allāh loves noble things, and He hates things that are shoddy.<sup>323</sup>

O my people, do not neglect your children and your wives! You must

<sup>323</sup> *inna ‘llāba yuḥibbu ma’āliya ‘l-umūri wa yakrabu safsāfahā.*

instruct them in the worshipful service [*‘ibāda*] of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), in how to behave correctly in His company, and in readiness to accept His will. From the point of view of your hearts, you should not be at all concerned about your means of livelihood. What you ought to be concerned about is whether you are directing your energies toward the fulfillment of your true responsibilities. It seems to me that most of you have been neglecting the education of your children, while concerning yourselves with their daily bread. Take the opposite approach, and you will be right on target. The Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) is reported as having said:

Each one of you is a shepherd, responsible for his flock.<sup>324</sup>

The father will be held responsible for his children and his wife, and his children and his wife will be held responsible in their turn. Every master will be held responsible for his slave, and every slave for his master. The teacher will be held responsible for his young students, the chief for the people of his village, and the king for the people of his kingdom. The Commander of the Believers [*Amīr al-Mu’minīn*], who is the shepherd of all the people, will be held responsible for his flock. No one among you is exempt. Every single one of you will be held responsible as a separate individual.

You must strive hard to ensure that you are not guilty of any injustice. You must strive hard to ensure that all rights are accorded to those who are entitled to them. You must be generous in sharing your goods with one another. You must be kind and compassionate in your treatment of one another. You must not curse one another. You must not try to control one another by force. You must settle your mutual accounts, and work hard in cooperation. Do not expose one another’s faults. You must be tolerant of one another where mistakes and failings are concerned. You must leave people under the protection of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He). You must command what is right and proper [*ma’ rūf*], and forbid what is wrong and unfair [*munkar*], but you must do so without prying and spying. You must express disapproval of flagrant misconduct, but it is not your business to probe into what is kept hidden. Overlook the faults of others, and Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) may overlook your own faults. The Prophet (Allāh bless him and give

<sup>324</sup> *kullukum rā’in mas’ūlun ‘an ra’iyyatib.*

him peace) used to love it when people were ready to forgive their fellow creatures, and he hated the prosecution of misdemeanors. This is why he said (Allāh bless him and give him peace):

Suspend the enforcement of the penalties [prescribed by Islāmic law] in cases where there are dubious circumstances [*idra' u 'l-ḥudūda bi'sh-shubuhāt*].<sup>325</sup>

He also said to 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (may Allāh be well pleased with him, and may He ennoble his countenance): “O 'Alī, be like this—look!” and he pointed to the sun.

The active practice of goodness [*iḥsān*] consists in giving more than you owe, and accepting less than what is due to you. If you are capable of going even further than this, you should ideally waive the whole of the debt that is owed to you, and give the debtor some extra credit into the bargain. Strength will thereby accrue to your faith [*īmān*], your conviction [*īqān*] and your confidence [*thiqa*] in your Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He).

When you sell by weight, you should tilt the balance in favor of your customer, for then Allāh may tilt the balance in your favor on the Day of Resurrection [*Yawm al-Qiyāma*]. O you who handle the scales, be sure to give an extra measure, for then you may receive an extra measure when Allāh gives you something. According to a traditional report, the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) once borrowed some pieces of silver from a man, and then, when it was time to settle the debt, he said to the person who was weighing his repayment: “Weigh the amount due, and add some extra weight.” If one of you ever borrows something from another person, he should give back more than he has received, voluntarily increasing his repayment by an amount that is over and above whatever was stipulated in the original loan.

O my people, you must buy from Allāh the nearness of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He). Buy Allāh from Allāh! As for your allotted portions of worldly goods [*aqsām*], they have been marked with their dates of delivery. They can neither increase nor diminish. It makes no difference whether you go looking for them or do not bother to look for them, whether you serve your Lord or disobey Him, whether you behave well

<sup>325</sup> This is one of the most fundamental principles of Islāmic jurisprudence. In another *ḥadīth*, the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) went so far as to say: “Suspend the enforcement of the prescribed penalties whenever you possibly can [*idra'u 'l-ḥudūda ma 'l-aṭa'um*].”

or badly. There can be no question of speeding up the delivery of allotments assigned to a later date, nor of postponing those that are due to come early.

What is required of you is that you move away from the realm of creation [*khalq*] as far as your hearts are concerned, and that you stand fast in the company of the Creator [*Khāliq*] on the feet of your innermost beings [*asrār*]. Allāh is the All-Providing One [*Razzāq*], while everyone else is provided for [*marzūq*]. He is the Independently Wealthy One [*Ghanī*], while everyone else is dependent on what He provides. He is the All-Capable One [*Qādir*], while everyone else is feeble and incompetent. He is the One who sets things in motion [*Muharrrik*] and the One who causes things to be still [*Musakkin*]. He is the Sovereign who exercises absolute dominion [*al-Mutasallit*], the Master who compels obedience [*al-Musakhkhir*]. All creatures are instruments subject to His control. He has supplied everything with a means of subsistence.

You must become oblivious of your fellow creatures, then of the material means [*asbāb*] and all the things of this world, as far as your hearts are concerned, and as far as your private lives, your spiritual contents [*ma' ānī*] and your innermost beings [*asrār*] are concerned. You must rid your hearts of everything apart from Him. You must take precautions now, in case He should look into your hearts while they still contain the desire for something other than Him, the wish for something other than Him. You must submit to His will [*aslimū*] and resign yourselves sincerely to submissive obedience [*istaslimū*]. You must affirm the Divine Unity [*wahhidū*] and be single in your devotion [*tawahhidū*]. You must be ready to accept the decree of destiny [*qadā'*], and be completely satisfied with the accomplished fact [*maqḍī*]. You must pay careful heed to your Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He), while turning a deaf ear to His creatures. You must take no notice of your fellow creatures, and try to be independent of them.

The hour of courage is an hour of patience.<sup>326</sup> You must repent, each and every one of you. You must repent wholeheartedly to the One who

<sup>326</sup> *sā'at asb-shajā'a ṣabr sā'a*. This was a favorite saying of Shaikh 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī (may Allāh be well pleased with him), judging by its frequent occurrence in his talks. Slight variations in the wording may be noted in certain instances. In the First Discourse of *The Sublime Revelation* [*al-Faṭḥ ar-Rabbānī*], for example, the text reads simply: *asb-shajā'a ṣabr sā'a* [Courage is an hour's patience], and in the Fiftieth Discourse of the same work we find: *ajal asb-shajā'a ṣabr sā'a* [The span of courage is an hour's patience]. (See p. 10 and p. 329, respectively, of the translation published by Al-Baz.)

holds the Hour [of Judgment] in His hand. You must remember death and that which lies beyond it. The Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) used to say:

Remember often the wrecker of delights [*bādim al-ladhbāt*],<sup>327</sup> for the less it is remembered, the more devastating it becomes, and the more it is remembered, the less dreadful it comes to be.

The remembrance of death is a remedy for the sickness of our lower selves [*nufūṣ*], and a strong dose of it has a beneficial effect upon our hearts. Forgetfulness of death results in the hardening of the heart, and causes it to have a lazy attitude to worshipful obedience.

If a person is guilty of paying too much attention to his fellow creatures, and of regarding them as the source of harm and benefit, he is liable to be seduced into unbelief, led astray into wicked ways, and barred from the vision of his Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He). To place reliance on a human being [*insān*] is to diminish faith [*īmān*] and extinguish the light of conviction [*īqān*]. It prevents the heart from experiencing the vision of the Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He). It invites His displeasure, causes one to fall from His grace, and bars the door to His nearness.

How unfortunate for you! What if you should die while you are in the state you are in right now, while your hearts are devoid of faith [*īmān*] and conviction [*īqān*], of the affirmation of Divine Unity [*tawḥīd*], of sincere devotion [*ikhhlās*], and of any real awareness [*maʿrifa*] of your Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He)? Woe unto you! There seems to be no limit to your insolence. You have made it your perverse habit to offer resistance to your Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He) every night and every day of your lives. No one who insists on being so stubborn and intractable will ever feel the breath of nearness, and not a single atom of value will ever fall into such a person's hand. You must give up this obstinate perversity, O you whose hearts are so impoverished, O you who have turned your backs on faith [*īmān*]!

O Allāh, join us closely together with all that You love, keep us far apart from all that You hate, and:

Give us in this world good, and good in the hereafter, and guard us against the torment of the fire! (2:201)<sup>328</sup>

<sup>327</sup> As Bauer has pointed out, the phrase "*bādim al-ladhbāt* [the wrecker of delights]" became the standard epithet of Death in the stories of *A Thousand and One Nights*.

<sup>328</sup> *ātina fi 'd-dunyā ḥasanatan wa fi 'l-ākhirati ḥasanatan wa qina 'adbāba 'n-nār.*



## The Forty-fourth Discourse

A certain righteous man is reported as having said: “The hypocrite [*munāfiq*] remains in one and the same spiritual condition for forty years at a stretch, while the champion of truth [*ṣiddīq*] experiences transformation forty times every single day.”

The hypocrite is totally involved with his lower self [*nafs*], his passions [*hawā*], his natural inclinations [*ṭabʿ*], his devil [*shaiṭān*] and his interest in the things of this world [*dunyā*]. He is committed to their service, from which he never takes a break. He is never known to disagree with their point of view, and he will never say a word to contradict them. His only interests are food and drink, clothes, sexual intercourse and the accumulation of worldly goods, and he does not care how he comes by them. He cultivates his physical body and his worldly affairs, but he lets his heart and his religion [*dīn*] go to waste. He tries to please his fellow creatures [*khalq*], but he gives offense to the Creator [*Khāliq*]. The longer his hypocrisy [*nifāq*] continues, the harder and darker his heart becomes, so he is quite unmoved and unaffected by any spiritual counsel [*mawʿiẓa*], takes no notice of any admonition [*ʿiẓa*], and pays no attention to any reminder. Thus it is undoubtedly a fact that he remains in one and the same spiritual condition for forty years at a stretch.

The champion of truth [*ṣiddīq*] cannot possibly remain in such a static condition, because he is entirely at the disposal of the Transformer of hearts [*Muqallib al-qulūb*], immersed in the ocean of His power, so that one wave raises him up and another sends him down. He is moved this way and that by the operations [*taṣārīf*] and transformations [*taqālib*] of the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He), like a feather in a windswept desert, like a fresh stalk [*khāma*] in the farmer’s field,<sup>329</sup> like

<sup>329</sup> According to the Arabic lexicographers, the word *khāma* signifies “a shoot of seed-produce when it first grows forth upon a single stalk.” (See: E.W. Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, art. *KH- Y-M*). Shaikh ʿAbd al-Qādir (may Allāh be well pleased with him) is no doubt alluding at this point to the saying of the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace):

The likeness of the believer is that of the fresh stalk of seed-produce, which the wind bends, at one time like this and at one time like that [*mathalu ʿl-muʿmini mathalu ʿl-khāmāti minā ʿz-zarʿi tumiluba ʿr-rīḥu marratan bākadbā wa marratan bākadbā*].



the corpse in the hands of the ritual washer of the dead [*ghāsil*], like the baby in the hands of the wet nurse [*ẓi'r*] or the midwife, like the ball on the receiving end of the polo player's mallet. He has surrendered both his outer [*ẓāhir*] and his inner being [*bāṭin*] to Him, and he is completely satisfied with His management. Far from taking any interest in his eating, his sleeping and his carnal appetites, he is interested only in the service of his Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He) and in earning His good pleasure. This is why a certain righteous man once said: "As for the people [of the Lord], their approach to eating is that of the sick, their form of sleep is the sleep of the drowned, and if they speak it is only out of sheer necessity." How could they not be like this? In their hearts there is something that is quite invisible to others. They have ceased to be aware of anything apart from their Lord. They have absented themselves from this world, the hereafter, and everything else apart from Him. They have settled humbly at His door. They have rested their heads on the threshold of His doorway, in readiness to comply with His orders. They have become accustomed to being contented, to needing nothing. Fate and destiny [*al-qadā' wa 'l-qadar*] are now their servants, and these two approach them in visible form and then carry them on their heads.

If you are not one of the people [of the Lord], they are the people you must serve. You must befriend them, sit in their company and draw close to them. Put your material goods at their disposal. Follow them by emulating their actions, not by repeating their words and saying how excellent and wonderful they are. Carry your righteousness [*ṣalāh*] in your heart; do not wear it as part of your outer clothing. Dress as ordinary people dress, but do not behave as they behave. We Muslims do not recognize monasticism where food, clothing and marriage are concerned. As Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) has said:

But monasticism they invented; We did not prescribe it for them.  
(57:27)<sup>330</sup>

In the words of the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace):

There is no such thing as monasticism in Islām.<sup>331</sup>

Those who are sincere in their devotion [*mukhliṣūn*] have their hermitages [*ṣawāmi'*] inside their hearts, while their harsh austerity is imposed on their lower selves [*anfus*], their passionate desires

<sup>330</sup> *wa rabbāniyyatani 'btada'ūbā—mā katabnābā 'alaibim.*

<sup>331</sup> *lā rabbāniyyata fī 'l-Islām.*

[*ahwiya*] and their natural inclinations [*ṭabā' i'*]. When they are alone in their private quarters, they experience the intimate friendship [*uns*] of their Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He) in confidential converse [*munājāt*] with Him.

Since the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He) is using my tongue to inform you about the spiritual state of the righteous [*ṣāliḥūn*], one of you may be used as a channel to convey such information to another. You must pay attention and take notice. It is He who is calling you through that person's mouth, so you must respond to the one who is transmitting His invitation. He is inviting you to pure serenity [*ṣafā'*]. He is urging you to abstain from His creation and to be satisfied with Him. He is urging you to be among those who remember Him, so that you may come to be among those who are remembered in His presence. In the quest for his Master [*Mawlā*], the honest servant must remember Him constantly, both outwardly [*ẓāhiran*] and inwardly [*bāṭinan*], both privately and publicly, by night and by day, in hardship and in ease, in bliss and in agony, until he comes to be one who is remembered by Him. That servant must remember Him audibly, by pronouncing His name aloud, and silently within his heart.

You are too sound asleep to realize that you are letting the bliss of the people [of the Lord] slip by you. O you who are so heedless of that bliss, will you not come to your senses? You are out of touch with that which should really concern you. You are very clever at dealing with the affairs of this world, but when it comes to the affairs of the hereafter you are sheer ignoramuses. You are bogged down in mud, so that with every move you make you sink deeper and deeper. Stretch out your hands toward Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) with an honest plea for salvation, offering repentance and an apology, so that He may deliver you from the mess you are in.

Here I am, calling upon you to resist the demands of your lower selves [*nufūs*], your passionate desires [*ahwiya*], your natural inclinations [*ṭabā' i'*] and your carnal appetites [*shahawāt*], and to bear with patience the disappointments you suffer. Respond to my call, for you will see the benefit of doing so, sooner or later.

Here I am, summoning you to violent death [*al-mawt al-aḥmar*]<sup>332</sup> in the Name of Allāh. Who will dare to respond? Who will step forward to meet the challenge? Who will show that he has the courage for it? Who will be prepared to take the risk? This means death, but then life everlasting. Do not run away! Endure with patience, and then with still more patience. Courage [*shajāʿa*] is an hour's patience.<sup>333</sup> You must be patient in your compliance with your Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He). If there is one among you who can bear the burden of readiness to accept the divine decree [*qadāʾ*], Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) will relieve him of it, and He will inscribe him in the register of the brave [*dīwān ash-shujʿān*]. When someone is ready to sacrifice himself, he acquires a sense of certainty [*yaqīn*]. When someone knows what he is looking for, he attaches little importance to what he must spend in order to attain his goal.

Be sure of where you stand, and then make haste. Come here on the footing of sincerity [*ṣidq*], so that you may knock at the door of the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He). You must stay there as long as it takes, until the door is opened for you and the angelic escorts [*mawākib*] come forth to welcome you. You may as well be importunate in asking Him for the things you need, since this will do you more good than your importunity [*tawāquḥ*] toward your kings and potentates and wealthy patrons.

<sup>332</sup> Lit., "red death"—as opposed to "white death" [*al-mawt al-abyaḍ*], meaning death by natural causes. Shaikh ʿAbd al-Qādir (may Allāh be well pleased with him) has used this same expression in the Fifty-first Discourse of *The Sublime Revelation* [*al-Faṭḥ ar-Rabbānī*] (pp. 331–32 of the Al-Baz edition), where he says:

O my people! I summon you to violent death [*al-mawt al-aḥmar*], that is to say, to combat with the lower self [*nafs*], the passions [*hawā*], the natural impulses [*ṭabʿ*] and the devil [*shayṭān*], to the abandonment of creatures, and to the renunciation of everything whatsoever apart from the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He). Do battle [*jāhidū*] on these terms and do not despair, for as the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He) has told us:

Every day He is about some awesome business. (55:29)

<sup>333</sup> In the Fifth Discourse of *The Sublime Revelation* [*al-Faṭḥ ar-Rabbānī*] (p. 49 of the Al-Baz edition), Shaikh ʿAbd al-Qādir (may Allāh be well pleased with him) has this to say on the subject of courage:

The courage [*shajāʿa*] of those who do battle with the unbelievers comes into play in their encounter and tenacious combat with the foe. The courage of the righteous [*ṣāliḥīn*], is shown in their encounter with their own selves [*nufūs*], passions [*ahwīya*] and natural instincts [*ṭibāʾ*], devils [*shayṭān*], and those evil companions who are human devils. The courage of the special few [*kbawāṣṣ*] lies in the renunciation of both this world and the hereafter, and of anything at all that is apart from the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He).

Follow the example set by your predecessors in their quest for their Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He) and their total absorption [*fanā'*] in Him.

O Allāh, You are our Lord [*Rabb*] and their Lord, our Creator [*Khāliq*] and their Creator, our Provider [*Rāziq*] and their Provider, so deal with us as You dealt with them! Bring us out of us, away from us, toward You! Cause us to forget the kings and their slaves, the sultans and their subjects, the rich and the poor, the élite and the masses, the rise and fall of market prices, affluence and scarcity. Remind us to remember You. Treat us gently in Your workings. Bring us close to Your nearness, and let our hearts enjoy Your intimate friendship [*uns*]. Keep us safe from the evil of Your cities and Your servants, and from the evil of every crawling creature that You grasp by the forelock<sup>334</sup> and seize by the tail. Keep us safe from the evil of the evildoers [*sharr al-ashrār*], and from the cunning deceptions of the morally corrupt [*kaid al-fujjār*]. Let us be members of Your party [*hizb*], guiding others to You while abasing ourselves before You, summoning others to You while humbling ourselves before You, but standing tall against those who behave with arrogance toward You and toward the true believers among Your creatures. Āmīn.



<sup>334</sup> An allusion to the verse [*āya*] of the Qur'ān in which Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) has said: There is not one creature that crawls, but He grasps it by the forelock [*mā min dābbatin illā Huwa ākbidhun bi-nāṣiyatibā*]. (11:56)

## The Forty-fifth Discourse<sup>335</sup>

**Y**ou must pass through and beyond the marketplace of your fellow creatures. Go in through the gate of your physical body, but come out and away from them with your heart and your intention [*niyya*]. Be like a solitary bird, neither offering familiarity nor accepting it, neither noticing others nor being noticed by them. Be like this until the script of destiny reaches its final period, and your heart draws near to the doorway of your Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He). Then you will see the hearts of the people [of the Lord] stationed there, and they will turn to greet you, offering you their congratulations and bidding you welcome, as they kiss you on the forehead. Then the hand of gracious favor will reach out to you from inside the door. It will greet you, pick you up, and convey you in solemn procession. It will lavish attention upon you, feeding you, quenching your thirst, and anointing you with perfume. It will seat you at the door, to watch and wait for the questing seekers who will come. As soon as each of these arrives, it will take him by the hand, and place his hand in your hand.

Once you have truly experienced all this, you must come forth and present yourself to your fellow creatures. You must be in their midst like a medical doctor in the midst of the sick, like an intelligent person in the midst of the insane, and like a tenderly loving father in the midst of his children. Before you have reached this stage, however, you are unworthy of respect. You are merely a hypocrite [*munāfiq*] as far as they are concerned, a servant at their beck and call. You imagine that you are providing them with therapy, when you are actually treating them as objects of worship [*mushrik bihim*]. The therapy you offer them will turn

<sup>335</sup> The passages printed in ordinary (non-bold) Jilani font are also to be found—with only minor differences almost entirely explicable as due to mistakes by the copyist of *Jalā' al-Khawāṭir*—in the Fifty-ninth Discourse and the Sixty-first Discourse of Shaikh 'Abd al-Qādir's work *The Sublime Revelation [al-Faṭḥ ar-Rabbānī]*. (See pp. 400, 417–20 and 434–37 of the translation published by Al-Baz.)

out to be a punishment for you, because it is administered in ignorance and it does more harm than good.

Speak only about things that really concern you, and stop talking about things that are no concern of yours. If you were truly aware of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), your fear of Him would be much greater, and you would do far less talking in His presence. This is why the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) has told us:

When someone really knows Allāh, his tongue becomes weary.<sup>336</sup>

That is to say, he becomes incapable of speech. The tongue of his lower self [*nafs*] is dumb, and he can only speak with the tongue of his heart [*qalb*], his innermost being [*sirr*], his spiritual content [*ma' ānī*], his true sincerity [*sidq*], and his pure serenity [*ṣafā'*]. The tongue of his falsehood is dumb, while the tongue of his truthfulness is capable of speech. Dumb is the tongue of his talking about things that are no concern of his, while capable of speech is the tongue of his talking about things that really do concern him. Dumb is the tongue of his quest for his own self-interest, while the tongue of his quest for the Truth [*Haqq*] is capable of speech.

In the initial stage of acquiring direct knowledge [*ma' rifā*], the faculty of speech is brought to a halt, and the person's entire existence [*wujūd*] simply melts away. He becomes extinct [*fānī*] to himself and to everything else. Then, if it be so willed by the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He), He will resurrect him. If He wishes him to be capable of speech, He will create a tongue for him to use, and He will cause him to speak with it. He will cause him to utter whatever words of wisdom [*hikam*] and whatever secrets [*asrār*] He wishes him to utter. That person's speech will then come to be a remedy within a remedy, a light within a light, a truth within a truth, a rightness within a rightness, a purity within a purity, because he will speak only at the behest of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), through the medium of his heart. If he should speak without such a command, he would perish, so he will not speak at all unless he is obliged to do so, because he receives an order and is moved by an irresistibly compelling action. If it comes about in this manner, well, the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He) is far too Generous [*Akram*] to find fault with someone who follows an overwhelming motivation, in which there is no element of lower self [*nafs*], of passionate desire [*hawā*], of natural inclination [*ṭab'*], of satanic

<sup>336</sup> *man 'arafa 'llāha kalla lisānub.*

influence [*shaiṭān*], or of willfulness [*irāda*]. No more would He chastise him for this, than He would take a corpse to task for uttering an articulate sound, or a dreamer for witnessing and experiencing the enactment of a sexual fantasy in his sleep. There have in fact been plenty of cases where spoken words were heard to issue from corpses, well after the time of death.

In case someone should take it upon himself to address his fellow creatures in any fashion other than the one we have just described, it would be far better for him to remain silent than to speak. None but the brave should dare to place himself in the front rank. Anyone who joins the front rank, without having either courage or skill, is doomed to perish.

Woe unto you! You claim to love Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), when you actually love anything but Him. Your false claim will be the cause of your destruction. How can you lay claim to love, when there is no visible sign of it about you? Love [*mahabba*] is like a fire in a house with neither door nor key; its flames emerge from up on top of the lover [*muḥibb*]. He locks the door of his love and tries to keep it hidden from view, while it reveals itself to him in a language peculiar to him, in a form of speech peculiar to him. He does not wish to share the company of his beloved [*mahbūb*] with anyone else, and this is one of the major signs of his genuine sincerity.

O liar, O jester! You had better hold your tongue, for you are not one of these. You are not a lover. The lover has faith [*īmān*], but he also experiences agitation and disturbance. The beloved has a feeling of calm tranquillity, dwelling in the chamber of grace and sleeping therein. The lover is in a state of exhaustion, while the beloved is in a state of comfortable relaxation. The lover is a learner [*mutāʿallim*], while the beloved is a learned scholar [*ʿālim*]. The lover is imprisoned, while the beloved is at liberty. The lover is crazy, while the beloved is perfectly sane.

When a little boy catches sight of a snake, he emits a loud scream. When the snake-charmer catches sight of a lion, he emits a loud scream and runs away in terror. As for the lion itself, it plays with the other lions and sleeps alongside them. Allāh (Exalted is He) has said:

Observe your duty to Allāh. Allāh will teach you. (2:282)<sup>337</sup>

<sup>337</sup> *wa 'ttaqu 'llāb : wa yu'allimukumu 'llāb.*

The lover [*muḥibb*] is dutifully devout and well-mannered as he stands in waiting at the door. He must make sure that his heart, as well as the limbs and organs of his physical body, is on its best behavior. Once he has achieved the proper state of refinement, he may enter within through the door of nearness. The law [*ḥukm*] refines behavior at the door, and knowledge [*‘ilm*] provides refinement inside the door. If a person behaves correctly at the door of the law, knowledge will accord him a friendly reception, take him into its care, provide him with instruction, supply all his needs, and keep him safe. The law is a communal doorway, while knowledge is a special door. If a person achieves an excellent standard of conduct and worshipful obedience at the communal doorway, he will come to be someone who enjoys a friendly reception behind the special door. He will come to be numbered among the company of the loved ones [*maḥbūbīn*].

There is nothing really worth talking about, until you can speak at length while sticking closely to the spiritual path [*ṭarīq*], practicing real servitude [*‘ubūdiyya*], and keeping a watch on your own lower self [*nafs*] with the eye of scorn and disdain. If a person can see and acknowledge his own deficiency, he will come to experience perfection, but if someone admires his own perfection, he will end up with nothing but deficiency. You must therefore turn about and face in the opposite direction, for only then you will hit the mark. You must seek good advice, for only then you will find the right track. You must be patient, for only then will you achieve success, find what you are seeking, and be carried forward to your goal. You must practice patience, for only then you will be treated with patience. You must accept with good grace, for only then will you be accepted with good grace. You must behave correctly, for only then will you be treated correctly. You must offer the greeting of peace, for only then will you be greeted with peace. You must be ready to comply, for only then will you be given helpful guidance. You must serve, for only then will you be served. You must stick close to the door, for only then will it be opened for you. You must not be too hasty, for only then will you obtain results. You must act with generosity, for only then will you be treated generously. You must draw near, for only then will you be drawn near. You must do well, for only then will you be treated well.



When the heart travels on the feet of dedicated efforts and exertions, covers the distance to its Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He), and finally attains to Him, it becomes firmly established in His presence, and for it there is no longer any question of going back. It moves out of the realm of Divine Wisdom [*Hikma*] and into the realm of Divine Power [*Qudra*], out of the realm of instruments [*ālāt*] and material means [*asbāb*], and into the realm of the Maker [*Ṣāniʿ*] and Originator [*Musabbib*]. It moves away from its own will [*mashīʿa*] and toward the Will of its Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He); away from its own movement and rest, and toward the movement and rest of its Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He).

O seekers of this world! As long as you are constantly engaged in the search for her,<sup>338</sup> you are doomed to weary labor. This world goes looking for those who try to run away from her. The harder a person runs in the effort to get away from her, the harder she runs after him. Then, if he turns around and gives her his attention, she draws the obvious conclusion from his insincerity. She therefore brings him under her control and puts him to work in her service, then eventually kills him off. If he does not turn around and give her his attention, on the other hand, she draws the obvious conclusion from his genuine sincerity, and so puts herself at his service. In order to derive benefit from this world, you must first become detached from her and actually run away from her. Yes, you must run away from her, for she is an extremely cunning, deceptively enchanting, and utterly lethal witch. You must separate from her with your hearts, before she separates from you. You must become detached from her, before she detaches herself from you. You should not take her as your wife, but if you do marry her, you must not let your religion [*dīn*] be stipulated in the contract as her dower [*mahr*],<sup>339</sup> for if you do so, the marriage will very quickly end in divorce. She will then be entitled to keep your religion, since it was stipulated in the marriage contract that your religion would be her nuptial gift [*ṣadāq*].<sup>340</sup> The religion of the hypocrite [*munāfiq*] is the dower of this world, while the blood of the martyred believer [*muʾmin shahīd*] is the dower of the hereafter, and the blood of the lover [*muḥibb*] is the dower of the nearness of the Lord [*Mawlā*].

<sup>338</sup> In Arabic, the words *ad-dunya* [this world] and *al-āk̄bira* [the hereafter] are grammatically feminine. This makes it easy for an Arabic speaker or writer to personify them as female beings, if he wishes to represent them as characters in a parable, rather than as abstract entities.

<sup>339</sup> It should be explained that the Islamic law of marriage requires the husband, not the wife, to provide the dower, which is an essential element in the marriage contract.

<sup>340</sup> As an Islamic legal term, *ṣadāq* (or *ṣidāq*) is actually a synonym of *mahr*. The translation “nuptial gift” should therefore not be taken to imply that it is merely optional.

Woe unto you! As long as you go on behaving as the servant of this world, she will injure you and do you no good at all. Once the tables are turned, however, so that she is now the one behaving as your servant, she will prove to be quite useful to you, and will cause you no harm. You must drive her out of your heart, for only then will you get to see her good side, the service she can provide, and how humble she can be. She displays herself to the heart of the believer [*mu'min*] in her most charmingly beautiful form, wearing every kind of adornment, so he asks her: "Who are you?" To this she replies: "I am this world, and you love dirhams and dīnārs [gold and silver coins]!"

A certain righteous man (may Allāh bestow His mercy upon him) is reported as having said: "Once in a dream I saw a very good-looking woman, and when I asked her who she might be, she said to me, "I am this world," so I said to her: "I take refuge with Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) from you and your wicked ways." To this she responded by saying: "You must feel a repugnance for dirhams and dīnārs, then you will be well protected against any wickedness of mine."

O liars! It is one of the essential prerequisites, for anyone who is truly honest [*ṣādiq*] about wishing for his Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He), that he must feel a strong repugnance for everything apart from Him, in both the outer [*ẓāhir*] and the inner [*bāṭin*] spheres. The outer sphere is this world with its carnal satisfactions, its sons and all that they possess, the praise and applause of one's fellow creatures, and their approval and acceptance. The inner sphere is the Garden of Paradise and all the blissful joys that it contains. Provided that someone genuinely meets this standard, his wish will be fully realized. His heart will then draw near to his Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He) and, having come to be a participant in His nearness, he will be completely devoted to Him. Once this stage has been reached, along will come this world with its particular nature, and along will come the hereafter with its peculiar character. The former will come with its finery, and the latter with its substance. They will both become maidservants ready to serve him. Their beauty will be for the benefit of the lower self [*nafs*], not of the heart. The food of this world and the food of the hereafter are for the benefit of the lower self, not of the heart. It is the food of nearness [to the Lord] that is for the benefit of the heart.

This to which I offer an invitation is the Will of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) for His creatures, not that to which you would invite us.

O hypocrites! The sensible person is one who examines the ultimate conclusions, and who is not deceived by the way things appear at the outset. The sensible person is one who merely asks to borrow this world and the hereafter, both of which are handmaidens for the people [of the Lord], whom they serve and whose words they hear and obey. The sensible person fetches the two of them and listens to what they have to say for themselves. He hears how this world describes itself, and he hears how the hereafter describes itself, then he purchases from each of them whatever is useful to him. He takes sparingly from this world, because it is so impermanent, and he turns his back on the hereafter, because it is new-fashioned [*muḥdatha*], a created entity [*makhblūqa*], which acts as a screen between its Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He) and anyone who goes after it and makes it, rather than Him, the object of his longing. To such a person this world will say: “Do not seek me, and do not take me as a wife, for I keep moving from palace to palace, from king to king. As soon as I get married to someone, I murder him and seize his property. Be on your guard against me, for I am a glutton for short-lived marriages [*dhawwāqa*], a treacherous killer. I do not fulfill the contract a person makes with me.” As for the hereafter, it will say to him: “I am branded with the mark of buying and selling. To put it in the words of my Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He):

Allāh has bought from the believers their persons and their goods, Paradise being theirs for the price. (9:111)<sup>341</sup>

—I see upon your face the mark of nearness, so do not purchase me, for Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) will not let you stay with me.”

Once he has really experienced all this, when he has abandoned both this world and the hereafter, and has turned his back on both of them, preferring to go in search of his Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He), this world will then be restored to him, so that he may enjoy his allotted shares thereof, free from the pressure of need. The hereafter will also be given back to him, so that it may serve him as a lady housekeeper [*qahramāna*].

<sup>341</sup> *inna 'llāba 'shtarā mina 'l-mu'minīna anfusabum wa amwālabum bi-anna labumu 'l-janna.*

Listen to this, O seekers! Listen to this, O you who are sick! What I have been explaining to you is a remedy for your ailments, so put it to good use! Whenever someone becomes detached from something, that thing comes looking for him. You must become detached from all objects of creation [*makhlūqāt*], so that the Creator [*Khāliq*] will love you. One who is beloved in the sight of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) may well be compared to an invalid in the clinic of a kind and gentle physician, who takes him into his personal care.

O my people, accept the advice I am offering you! You must detach yourselves from this world, for your fondness and love for it will set up a barrier to keep you from the hereafter, from the nearness of your Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He), and from the delight of the eyes of your hearts. Getting stuck with this world will block you off from the hereafter, while getting stuck with the lower self [*nafs*] will block you off from the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He).

O ignorant ones! Do not consume the fruits of this world at the expense of losing the fruits of the hereafter. The hereafter is a princess [*sayyida*], for whom this world is a female slave [*mamlūka*], and the slave must follow and obey the owner. The one is lowly, while the other is lofty, and the lowly must follow and obey the lofty. You must not consume the food of this world without first taking the antidote [*tiryāq*], for it is food that has been poisoned. What is this antidote? It is the practice of abstinence, of detaching yourself from this world and moving on, as far as your heart is concerned, from the ocean of wisdom [*ḥikma*] to the ocean of power [*qudra*], from the medicine [*ṭibb*] to the physician [*ṭabīb*], who will show you how to tell the difference between the part that is poison and the part that is edible meat. Surely you must have heard, or maybe even seen for yourself, how the snake-charmer [*hawwāʾ*] grabs hold of the snake [*ḥayya*], slaughters it, cooks it, draws the poison out of it, and then finally eats the meaty part of it.

The Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He) makes the poison of this world available to the unbelievers [*kuffār*] who commit sinful offences against Him, and who settle for others apart from Him. As for the believers, how could He fail to treat them favorably, when they are His guests? He behaves with them as the lover would behave in dealing with the beloved. For them He singles out the sweet from the midst of

the bitter, the pure from the midst of the contaminated. For those who are sought after [*murādūn*], He provides choice food and drink, clothing, and everything else they may need.

The would-be ascetic [*mutazahhid*] is still working at his abstinence, and there will be times when he fails to keep it up. There will be times when he makes the effort, and times when he gives up trying. As for the truly practicing abstainer [*zāhid*], for him the business of abstinence has already revealed all its secrets, so he can readily distinguish the pure from the contaminated. That which is pure calls out to identify itself to him, and that which is contaminated calls out to him likewise.

The people [of the Lord] have had all their avenues united, so there is only one direction left for them to take. The avenues still open to their fellow creatures have become too narrow for them to consider, while the direction of the Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He) has opened wide for them. They have blocked the avenues of creation [*khalq*] with the hands of their own truthfulness [*sidq*], and they have opened up the avenues of the Creator [*Khāliq*] with the hands of their hearts. The result, of course, is that their hearts have grown wider and greater and more splendid, and that now the force of dignity is stationed at the doorways of their hearts, preventing anyone from entering into them except their Owner [*Mālik*] and Creator. Every single one of these people [of the Lord] is like the sun and the moon in this world. These two are the sources of this world's light, and contact with their surfaces would cause everything on earth to catch fire.

You are dead bodies. Why are you walking about on the face of the earth? You must be sensible, for as long as you have no sense you cannot be one of the men of valor. You cannot recognize the men of valor, the chieftains of the Truth [*Ḥaqq*] and the great ones among them. The way you talk is a sure sign of what is in your heart. The tongue is the heart's interpreter [*al-lisānu tarjūmānu 'l-qalb*].

When you happen to feel love for one person and hatred for another, you must neither love the former nor hate the latter because of your lower self [*nafs*] and your natural inclination [*ṭab'*]. You must rather judge between the two of them on the basis of the Book and the Sunna. Then, if these criteria are favorable to the one whom you have regarded with affection, you must continue to feel that affection, but if they are unfavorable,

you must abandon the affectionate feeling. If they prove favorable to the one you disliked, however, you must give up the feeling of hate, while if they are unfavorable you must continue to hate the person.<sup>342</sup>

Woe unto you! You feel hatred for me because I speak the truth, and because I make you face the truth. No one hates me and ignores me unless he is ignorant of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), someone who is given to an awful lot of talk, but very little in the way of action! And no one loves me unless he is well aware of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), someone who is given to plenty of action and very little talk! The nearness of the Truth [*Ḥaqq*] has nourished me so well that I need nothing else. There is so much water all around me, while I am like a frog in a kettle. I say whatever I have to express. I wait for the water to flow through, and I talk. When that happens, you hear the news about you and the news about other people.

When will you ever repent, O you backsliders, O you rebellious sinners? You must become reconciled with your Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He) through the medium of repentance. Were it not for the sense of shame that I feel in the presence of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) and of His knowledge [*ilm*], I would get up and grab one of you by the hand, and I would say to him: “You have acted like this and you have behaved like that, so now you must turn in repentance toward Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He).”

There is no point in talking to you or conversing with you, until your faith [*īmān*] has grown strong, and likewise your certitude [*iqān*] and your intimate knowledge [*maʿ rifa*] of your Master [*Mawlā*] (Almighty and Glorious is He). Only when you have reached that stage will you have a firm grip on the most secure handle [*biʿl-urwati ʿl-wuthqā*],<sup>343</sup> which signifies the attainment of your heart to contact with Him. The Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) will then point to you with pride [as a member of his community] in the presence of all the religious communities.

<sup>342</sup> This paragraph also occurs in the Fifty-ninth Discourse of *The Sublime Revelation* [*al-Faṭḥ ar-Rabbānī*]. (See p. 400 of the translation published by Al-Baz.)

<sup>343</sup> An allusion to the verse [*āya*] of the Qurʾān in which Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) says: There is no compulsion in religion. The right direction is henceforth distinct from error. And he who rejects false deities and believes in Allāh has grasped the most secure handle, which will never break. [*lā ikrāha fi ʿd-dīn: qad tabayyana ʿr-rushdu minā ʿl-gbayy: fa-man yakfur biʿt-tāghūti wa yuʿmin biʿllābi fa-qadi ʿstamsaka biʿl-urwati ʿl-wuthqā la nfiṣāma labāʾ*]. (2:256)

O you who believe according to your tongue, how long will it be before you believe with your heart? O you who are a believer [*mu'min*] according to your public appearance, how long will it be before you are a believer where your private life is concerned? Salvation comes with the faith of the heart. This is the really useful thing. There is no benefit at all in faith of the tongue combined with the unbelief [*kuf*r] of your heart. The faith of the hypocrite [*munāfiq*] is the faith of those who are afraid of the sword.

O servants of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He):

Do not despair of the mercy of Allāh. (39:53) And do not despair of the Spirit of Allāh. (12:87)<sup>344</sup>

O you who are dead at heart, you must practice constantly the remembrance of your Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He), the recitation of His Book, the study of the Sunna of the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace), and attendance at sessions devoted to divine remembrance [*majālis adh-dhikr*]. Your hearts will then come back to life, just as the dead earth is brought back to life by the downpour of abundant rain upon it. When the heart is constantly engaged in the remembrance of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), it comes to be endowed with intimate experience [*ma'rifa*], knowledge [*'ilm*], the affirmation of Divine Unity [*tawhīd*], absolute trust [*tawakkul*], and a lack of interest in everything whatsoever apart from Him. The constant practice of remembrance produces good results that are constantly enduring in both this world and the hereafter.

As long as you are still attached to this world and to your fellow creatures, you will continue to be influenced by praise and blame, because your whole existence is bound up with your lower self [*nafs*], your passions [*hawā*] and your natural inclinations [*ṭab'*]. When your heart attains to contact with your Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He), and when your whole concern winds up with Him, only then will you cease to be subject to those influences, and you will be relieved of an enormous burden. As long as all your interest is focused on this world, and while your reliance is solely on your own strength and power, you will always feel disjointed and fragmented, exhausted and discontented. In similar fashion, if you concentrate

<sup>344</sup> *lā taqnaṭū min raḥmati 'llāh—wa lā tai'asū min Rawḥi 'llāh.*



on the hereafter with all your personal energy, you will never make the connection. But if you devote all your attention to the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He), the door to all that is needed for worldly life will be opened by the hand of His strength and by total trust in Him, and the door to acts of worshipful obedience will be opened by the hand of His helpful guidance [*tawfiq*].

Once you have reached the stage of applying to Him, therefore, you must apply to Him for strength and honesty in the quest for His forgiving grace and His assistance. You must plant the feet of your heart and your innermost being [*sirr*] most firmly in His presence, while in a state of complete detachment from the business of this world and the hereafter.

Woe unto you! Your lower self [*nafs*] is sick, so you must make it stick to a wholesome diet, until it is restored to good health by its Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He).

Woe unto you! How can you seriously aspire to the nearness of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), as long as your lower self [*nafs*] is in charge of you and your passions [*hawā*] are leading you along, while you are inclined to go chasing after carnal pleasures and attractions, and while the fire of your natural impulse [*ṭab'*] is burning up your devotion to duty [*taqwā*] and your religion [*dīn*]? Be sensible! This is not the behavior of someone who believes in death and is aware of it with certitude. This is not the behavior of someone who is consciously looking forward to the encounter with the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He), and who dreads the reckoning and interrogation to which He will subject him. You have no clarity of thought. You have no devotion to duty. You never enjoy a moment of calm repose, by night or by day, in the ceaseless process of trying to accumulate the benefits of this world and the hereafter, thinking about them, spending time in the company of people who have expert knowledge of them, and seeking to ingratiate yourself with such people.

As for the people [of the Lord], they attach very little importance to this world and the hereafter, and they are indifferent to the hardships of life in the realm of creation. Any one of them may be compared to a man who has dispatched his laden camel [in a caravan] to Khurāsān, having already built a house over there on Mount Juraida. As he watches the progress of his caravan, and sees its commander come out to lead it, his physical



body may be present as part of the scene, but his whole heart has gone on ahead to his home. The true believer [*mu'min*] has dispatched a shipment of goods to the hereafter, having already built a mansion over there. For all its charm, however, his whole heart yearns for the nearness of the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He). This is why the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) has told us:

This world is the believer's prison [*ad-dunyā sijnu'l-mu'min*].

The true believer remains ever true to his faith [*īmān*], so that he comes to be one who is really aware [*ʿārif*] of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), one who knows Him well [*ʿālim bihi*], one who is near to Him, and one who attains to contact with Him. Having reached this stage, he prefers Him over everything else. He presents his belongings to the servants who wait in attendance at the door, all of them longing to be admitted inside the palace of nearness [to the Lord]. He gives the key to his mansion, the one in the Garden of Paradise, back to its custodian. His innermost being [*sirr*] approaches the gates of the Gardens, but only in order to leave them all shut. He also locks the doors of the realm of creation and worldly existence [*wujūd*]. Then he throws himself at the door of the King, where he acts as if he were sick, and falls as if he had been flung there like a lump of meat. He waits for the feet of Gracious Favor to pass by and trample on him. He waits for a glance from the eye of Mercy, and for the hand of Noble Generosity and Kindness to be extended. Then, as he lies there in this state—lo and behold!—he suddenly finds himself inside the chamber of Nearness, in the room of Gracious Favor, in the presence of the Expert Physician, who proceeds to exercise and train him, to restore his strength and energy, to entertain him, to deck him out in fine attire and jewelry, to feed him with the food of Grace and quench his thirst with the drink of Intimate Friendship. For this is the point at which Mercy has arrived in the Palace of Nearness, and when Joy has arrived on the Balconies of Attainment.

All created entities have now come to be beneath him, and he looks upon them with the eye of gentle sympathy, giving expression to the attributes [*akhlāq*] of the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He), because the hearts of those who have attained to Him are filled with merciful compassion [*rahma*] for their fellow creatures. They look with the eye of merciful compassion upon both the Muslims and the unbelievers

[*kāfirīn*], upon both the common people and the special few. They treat them all with compassion, while at the same time insisting that they must observe the rules of the sacred law [*shar'*]. Outwardly, there is the insistence; inwardly, there is the compassion. O servants of Allāh! Whenever you encounter one of these people [of the Lord], you must be ready to serve him. Take note of what I am telling you, for I am giving you sound advice.

O you who idle away your time in your houses or your hermit cells [*sawāmi'*], stuck there with nothing to keep you company but the lower self [*nafs*], the urges of natural disposition [*tab'*], the passions [*hawā*], and very little knowledge [*'ilm*], the company you need to seek is that of the Shaikhs who put their knowledge into actual practice [*ash-shuyūkh al-'ummāl bi'l-'ilm*]. You must carry out their instructions and follow in their footsteps. You must act toward them with humility, and endure with patience the harsh treatment they administer, until your passions have ceased to control you, your lower selves have been subdued, and the flames of your natural urges have been snuffed out. Once this stage has been reached, you will recognize this world for what it is, since you will know it through experience. It will then become your maidservant, who must give you what she is obliged to give you. In other words, she will give you your quotas of the allotments she has to distribute. She will bring them to you while you are at the doorway of your nearness to your Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He). Both she and the hereafter are ready to act as maidservants for anyone who serves the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He).

When the believer's heart is such that the affirmation of Divine Unity [*tawhīd*] has become highly developed within it, the rate of his growth will accelerate with every day that passes. The more he grows, matures, and rises to fresh heights, the less he will pay attention to anything on the face of the earth or in heaven, other than Allāh. All created beings will be at his command, while he resides in the privacy of his home and in the presence of the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He). Once he has reached this stage, he will be empowered by Him and will enjoy direct access to Him, and so he will come to be the executive ruler [*sulṭān*] of his age. He will be empowered to make binding decisions, to issue decrees and to govern. The best friends of the King will be ready to serve

him, and he will enjoy a close personal relationship with His Majesty.

O my people! You must believe the word of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), the word of His Messenger (Allāh bless him and give him peace), and the word of the righteous [*ṣālihīn*] among His creatures. Allāh (Exalted is He) is surely Truthful [*Ṣādiq*], because He has said:

And who can be more truthful in speech than Allāh? (4:122)<sup>345</sup>

As for the Messenger and the righteous, their veracity [*ṣidq*] is derived from His veracity.

If your heart adopts a properly respectful stance at the door of the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He), you will no longer be guilty of associating partners with Him [*shirk*], your quest for Him will be over, and the quality of your behavior will be greatly improved. Patience frees one from the influence of carnal appetites. Patience causes bad habits to fade away, severs attachment to material means [*asbāb*], and shakes off dependence on the worldly owners of such means [*arbāb*].

You are so stupid! You are so ignorant of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) and His Messenger [*rasūl*], His saints [*awliyā'*] and the special few [*khawāṣṣ*] among His creatures (may the blessings and peace of Allāh be upon them all). You claim to be committed to abstinence [*zuhd*], and yet you are actually longing to satisfy your appetites. Your abstinence is something you practice only when it is convenient. Your real longing is wholly for things belonging to this world and your fellow creatures. You feel no longing for your Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He). You had better beware of standing in the presence of your Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He)!

You must improve your attitude of mind and your behavior, so that I may guide you in the direction of your Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He), and so that I may acquaint you with the path that leads to Him. You must strip from yourself the garment of arrogant pride, and take to wearing the garment of humility. You must practice self-abasement until you can be truly humble, then conduct yourself with humility so that you may grow in stature. Everything that you are now involved in, everything you are concerned about, all of it is nothing but a delusion wrapped up in yet another delusion!

<sup>345</sup> *wa man aṣḍaqu minā 'llāhi qilā.*

If you reject the notion [*kbāṭir*] of the lower self, the notion of the passions, the devil's notion and the notion of this world, the notion of the hereafter will come to you. Then you will receive the angel's notion, then finally the notion of the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He). This is the ultimate stage.

When your heart is sound, it will pause to ask each notion as it arises: "What kind of notion are you? From what source do you come?" So it will say: "I am the notion of such-and-such...."<sup>346</sup>

The majority of you are governed by a delusion within a delusion, worshipping creatures in your cells [*ṣawāmi*']. This business is not something that comes about merely through sitting in secluded places [*kbālāwāt*] with ignorance for company.

You must walk forth in search of knowledge [*ilm*] and scholars who put their knowledge into practice [*ulamā*' *ummāl*], until you can walk no farther. You must keep walking until your legs will no longer obey you. Then, when you have no strength left, you may sit down. Travel with your outer [*zābir*], then with your heart and your inner content [*ma'nā*]. When you are utterly exhausted both outwardly and inwardly [*bāṭinan*] and have to stop, nearness to Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) and attainment to Him will come to you. When the footsteps of your heart come to a halt, and all your energies have gone into the journey toward Him, this is the sign of your nearness to Him, so at this point you must surrender [*sallim*] and cast yourself down in submission [*istatīḥ*]. He will either build you a cell in the earth and lodge you in the desert wastes, or else He will send you back to civilization, putting this world and the hereafter, jinn, human beings, angels and spirits [*arwāḥ*] at your service.

**When you are standing at last in the doorway of the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He), you will witness something marvelous—no, I should say many marvelous things. You must forget about what you have to eat and drink, the clothes you have to wear, the situation in which you find yourself, and the praise and the blame of other people. These things are all functions of our lower selves**

<sup>346</sup> As recorded in the Sixty-first Discourse of *The Sublime Revelation* [*al-Faṭḥ ar-Rabbānī*] (see p. 418 of the translation published by Al-Baz), this paragraph continues:

"I am a true notion from the Truth [*kbāṭir ḥaqq min al-Ḥaqq*].... I am a loving counselor; the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He) loves you, so I love you too.... I am the ambassador [*ṣaḥīḥ*].... I am your portion of the spiritual state [*ḥāl*] of Prophethood [*nubuwwa*]."

[*a' māl an-nufūs*], not functions of our hearts [*a' māl al-qulūb*]. This heart should become an orchard [*bustān*] containing many trees and various kinds of fruit, as well as clearings and open spaces, rivers and mountains. It should have a panoramic view of all human beings, jinn, angels and spirits [*arwāḥ*] put together. This is something far beyond the grasp of purely mental understanding.

O Allāh, if what I am engaged in is something real and true, let the truth and reality of it be made apparent to those who follow the spiritual path [*fa-ḥaqqiqḥu li's-sālikīn*]. But if it is something false, I beg you to erase it! If I am in the right, then build my edifice high and raise it tall, and expedite the guidance of Your creatures through my agency. Raise our hearts up toward You! How much longer must we endure this weary toil? When will our hearts have taken the final steps on their journey? When will they enjoy the banquet on the roof of the Palace of Nearness, delighting in the view of Your creation from its lofty balconies?

And Allāh coins similitudes for the sake of mankind. (14:25)<sup>347</sup>

When the heart is truly sound, it forgets everything apart from the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He). He is the One who exists from all eternity [*al-Qadīm*], the One who exists to all eternity [*al-Azalī*], the Enduring [*ad-Dā'im*], the Everlasting [*al-Abadī*], and everything apart from Him is but newly created [*muḥdath*]. When the heart is truly sound, the speech that issues from it will come to be correct and true, so that no one can refute it. Heart will speak to heart, innermost being [*sirr*] to innermost being, private refuge [*khalwa*] to private refuge, inner content [*ma'nā*] to inner content, essence [*lubb*] to essence, conscience [*ṣawāb*] to conscience. At this stage, therefore, the words that come from it will be for other hearts like seeds that sprout in good soft earth, not salty marshland. When the heart is truly sound, it becomes a tree with branches, leaves and fruit. It comes to contain benefits for all creatures, whether they be humans or jinn or angels.

If you acquire knowledge for the sake of this world, you will work for the sake of this world, and if you acquire knowledge for the sake of the hereafter, you will work for the sake of the hereafter. The branches are based upon the roots. "As you pay allegiance, so shall allegiance be paid to you [*kamā tadīnu tudānu*]." Every pot exudes its own contents. You

<sup>347</sup> *wa yaḍribu 'llāhu 'l-amṭāla li'n-nāsi.*

fill your pot with naphtha [*naft*] and then expect it to exude rose water. You are unworthy of respect. You work for the sake of creatures, yet you wish to have the Creator on your side tomorrow [at the Resurrection], to enjoy nearness to Him and to look upon Him. You are unworthy of respect.

This is the obvious and most probable scenario. But if He grants you His gifts purely as a gracious favor, not for any work you have done, that is up to Him. Worshipful obedience [*tā'a*] is the work of the Garden [of Paradise], while sinful disobedience [*ma'ṣiya*] is the work of the Fire [of Hell]. After that, the matter is up to Him. If He so wills, He may reward one of us without reference to work, or He may chastise one of us without reference to work. This is all up to Him.

Listen to me and try to grasp what I have to say, for I am the humble servant [*ghulām*] of those who have gone on before us. I stand in their presence. I spread out their wares and invite people to examine them. I never cheat in the process, and do not pretend that they are my own property. I begin by quoting what they have said, then I go over it from my own point of view.

Blessed grace [*baraka*] comes from Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), and Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) has bestowed many blessings upon me, such as my obedience to the Messenger (Allāh bless him and give him peace) and my filial piety [*birr*] toward my father and my mother. May Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) have mercy upon them both! My father abstained from the pleasures of this world, although he had the power to enjoy them, while my mother went along with him in this and approved of what he did. They were among the people of righteousness [*ṣalāh*], religious devotion [*diyāna*] and compassion for all creatures, but my real concern is not with them, nor with other people. I have come to the Bearer of the Message [*ar-Rasūl*] and the Sender of the Message [*al-Mursil*], and because of them I prosper. Every benefit and blessing of mine is with them and in their presence. Among creatures I wish for no one apart from Muḥammad (Allāh bless him and give him peace), and among lords for none but my Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He).

O learned one, your speech comes from your tongue, not from your heart, from your outer form and not from your inner content [*ma'nā*]. The true heart shies away from words that issue from the tongue instead of from the heart, for they sound like a bird in a cage, or like the hypocrite in the

mosque [*masjid*]. If one of the champions of truth [*ṣiddīqūn*] should find himself by accident at a session [*majlis*] held by one of the hypocritical scholars, his whole aspiration would be to get out of there.

The people [of the Lord] can detect the signs that mark the pretenders [*murā'ūn*], the hypocrites [*munāfiqūn*], the impostors [*dajjālūn*], the heretical innovators [*mubtadi'ūn*], the enemies of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) and the enemies of His Messenger. These signs are apparent in their faces and in their way of speaking. They flee from the champions of truth as they might flee from a lion, fearful of being scorched by the fire of their hearts. The angels take them away from the champions of truth and the righteous [*ṣāliḥūn*]. One of them may be great in the eyes of the common folk [*'awāmm*], but in the eyes of the champions of truth he is of no account. To the common folk he is a human being [*ādamī*], but to the champions of truth he is a cat [*sinnawr*]. He carries no weight with them.

**O young men! First you must find the physician of the law [*ṭabīb al-ḥukm*], for he will provide the treatment you need to cure you of your diseases. You must take the medicine he prescribes, for then you will be protected from harm. You must follow the servant on duty [*ghulām*], for he will escort you to the master [*ustādh*]. The law [*ḥukm*] is the servant of knowledge [*'ilm*], so you must follow it, notice the door through which it enters, and go in behind it. You must look for the doorway of your Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He). You must cultivate good manners in the company of the law, since the law is the servant on duty at the door. If you do not follow the law, you have no way of attaining to knowledge. Surely you must have heard the words of your Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He):**

So whatever the Messenger gives you, take it; and from whatever he forbids you, abstain. (59:7)<sup>348</sup>

Provided that you cultivate well-mannered behavior in the company of the law, once you have reached the door of your Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He), and that you are escorted by the law when you call out to seek admission, He will respond to your call. He will open unto you the door of His nearness, and He will invite you to sit at the table of His gracious favor and His generous hospitality. You will then be treated as

<sup>348</sup> *wa mā ātākumu 'r-rasūlu fa-kbudhūbu wa mā nahākum 'anbu fa-'ntabū.*

His guests. He will converse with your hearts and entertain your innermost beings [*asrār*], teaching them the knowledge which He teaches only to the special few [*khawāṣṣ*] among His creatures. Thus His law will come to be the link between Him and the rest of His creatures, while His knowledge will be between Him and you, because the law is collective in its application [*al-ḥukm mushtarak*], whereas knowledge is specific [*al-‘ilm khāṣṣ*]. The law is a matter of faith, whereas knowledge is a matter of seeing the evidence with one’s own eyes [*al-ḥukm īmān wa ‘l-‘ilm ‘iyān*].

O Allāh, grant us knowledge and sincerity [*ikhhlās*] in all our actions. Grant us insight into Your knowledge, and steadiness in our insight, and:

Give us in this world good, and good in the hereafter, and guard us against the torment of the fire! (2:201)<sup>349</sup>

Praise be to Allāh, by whose gracious favor good works are brought to completion!



This marks the conclusion of the text of *Jalā’ al-Khawāṭir* [The Removal of Cares], one of the literary works of the Shaikh, the Imām, the learned scholar, the pious abstainer, the dutiful worshipper, the knower by direct experience, the avoider of excess, the solitary Axis [*al-Qutb al-fard*], the Spiritual Helper [*al-Ghawth*], the Shaikh of the shaikhs and the saints [*Shaikh al-mashā’ikh wa ‘l-awliyā’*], our master and our shaikh, Shaikh Muḥyi ‘d-Dīn Abū Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Ḥasanī al-Ḥusainī, son of Abū Ṣāliḥ ‘Abdu’llāh al-Jīlī. May Allāh the Exalted be well pleased with him, and may He give him reason to be well pleased with us. May we derive benefit from his words, in letter and in spirit [*lafẓan wa ma‘nan*], in knowledge and in practice [*‘ilman wa ‘amalan*].

<sup>349</sup> *ātīnā fi ‘d-dunyā ḥasanatan wa fi ‘l-ākhirati ḥasanatan wa qīnā ‘adbāba ‘n-nār.*



## Appendix

### Advice and Counsel Bequeathed by the Supreme Helper [*Waṣāyā Ghawthiyya*]

The following is the advice and counsel bequeathed by the consummate and learned one [*al-kāmil al-‘ālim*], the unveiler of the true realities [*kāshif al-ḥaqā’iq*], the exemplary model for all creatures [*muqtadā ‘l-khalā’iq*], the spiritual pole-star of Lordly attributes [*al-quṭb ar-rabbānī*], the immortal spiritual helper [*al-ghawth aṣ-ṣamadānī*], the reviver of truth and religion [*muḥyi ‘l-ḥaqq wa ‘d-dīn*], Shaikh ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Ḥasanī al-Jilānī (may Allāh sanctify his noble innermost being):

O my dear son! I counsel you to practice true devotion [*taqwā*] to Allāh and to be ever fearful of offending Him. I also advise you to be ready at all times to fulfill your duty to your parents and your duty to all the elders [*mashā’ikh*], for Allāh looks with favor upon His servant when he acts accordingly.

You must always be a faithful custodian of the Truth [*Ḥaqq*], both in private and in public.

You must not neglect the recitation of the Qur’ān, both outwardly and inwardly, in private and in public, with understanding and deliberation, with gravity and reflection and the shedding of tears. You must refer to the unambiguous wording of the Qur’ān whenever a ruling is required, for the Qur’ān is Allāh’s evidence against His creatures. You must not take a single step beyond the bounds of [religious] knowledge [*‘ilm*]. You must study the science of Islamic law [*fiqh*].

Do not be one of those Ṣūfis of the ignorant and vulgar type, and shun the people of the marketplaces, for they are the thieves of our religion and the highway robbers on the road of the Muslims.

You must adhere to the beliefs of those who affirm the Divine Unity [*ahl at-tawḥīd*], and steer well clear of newly concocted doctrines

[*muḥdathāt*], for every newly concocted doctrine is an heretical innovation [*bid'a*] and an error.

You must not spend your time in the company of juveniles, women, heretics [*mubtadi'a*], rich people and the common folk, for this is a sure way to lose your religion. You should be content with very little of what this world has to offer. Spend most of your time in private places, and let yourself be moved to tears by your dread [of earning your Lord's displeasure].

Eat nothing but lawful food [*ḥalāl*], for it is the key to all good things, and do not touch unlawful food [*ḥarām*], unless you want the Fire of Hell to touch you on the Day of Resurrection [*Yawm al-Qiyāma*]. You must also dress yourself in lawful attire. If you follow this advice, you will discover the sweetness of faith [*īmān*] and worshipful service [*'ibāda*].

Be aware of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), and do not forget your station in the presence of Allāh (Exalted is He). Make it your frequent practice to perform the ritual prayer [*ṣalāt*] during the night, and to fast during the daytime.

Do not stand apart from the general congregation, unless you are an Imām and must therefore be in a position to set an example.

Do not seek political leadership [*riyāsa*], for one who seeks political leadership can never prosper. Do not lend your signature to affidavits relating to security transactions [*qabālāt*]. Do not become the boon companion of judges [*quḍāt*] and potentates [*salāṭīn*], and do not get involved in testamentary dispositions [*waṣāyā*].

Flee from other people as you would flee from the lion. You must lead a private existence in order to ensure that you do not lose your religion. You must also do a lot of traveling. As the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) has said:

Go on an expedition! It will be good for your health and you will profit by it.

Be careful not to hurt the feelings of your elders.

Do not let compliments go to your head, and do not attach importance to critical comments that may be made about you. Let praise and blame be matters of equal indifference as far as you are concerned.

Be on your best behavior with all your fellow creatures, and always adopt a humble attitude toward them, for the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) has told us:

If a person is humble, Allāh will raise him up, but if a person is arrogant, Allāh will put him down.

It is important for you to cultivate good manners under all circumstances, regardless of whether you are dealing with righteous people or with immoral characters. You must accord favorable treatment to all your fellow creatures, be they young or old, little or great. You must never regard them with anything less than a sympathetic eye.

Do not indulge in coarse laughter, for such laughter arises from heedlessness and it causes the heart to die. As Allāh's Messenger (Allāh bless him and give him peace) has told us:

If only you knew what I know, you would surely laugh very seldom and you would surely weep very often.

You must never feel safe from the cunning devices of Allāh, and yet you must never despair of Allāh's mercy. You must live your life between fear and hope.

O my dear son! You must become detached from this world, for in the pursuit of it lies the loss of your religion [*dīn*]. You must make it your practice to keep the fast [*ṣawm*], to perform the ritual prayer [*ṣalāt*], to make your supplication [*du'ā'*] loud and clear, to let your clothes be threadbare, your comrades paupers, your home a mosque [*masjid*], your property a knowledge of Islamic law [*fiqh*], your finery a pious abstinence [*zuhd*], and your intimate companion a Noble Lord [*Rabb Karīm*].

Do not pay special attention to anyone until it is clearly apparent to you that he possesses these five characteristics: (1) He prefers poverty to affluence. (2) He prefers the hereafter to this world. (3) He prefers humility to haughty pride. (4) He is keenly aware of what is done in secret and what is done in public. (5) He is prepared to face death.

O my dear son! Do not let yourself be dazzled by this world and its splendors, for this world is green and ripe and sweet. If someone becomes attached to it, it attaches itself to him, and if someone rejects it, it rejects him in return. Besides, there is no way for it to last forever. By night and by day, you must always be prepared for the trip that will take you out of it and into the hereafter.

O my dear son! You must accustom yourself to solitude. You must be lonely, separate, attentive to your heart because of the fear of Allāh. You must acknowledge the generous favors of Allāh (Exalted is He). You must live your life in this world as if you were a stranger in exile, and then depart from it as you came into it, for you have no way of knowing what your tomorrow has in store for you at the Resurrection.

**T**his concludes the wise advice expressed in such noble words by Shaikh ‘Abd al-Qādir. May Allāh the Exalted be well pleased with him, and may He grant him contentment. May He include us among his sincere devotees and followers, and enable us to accomplish what he would wish for and approve.

Āmīn, O Lord of All the Worlds [*yā Rabba ‘l-‘ālamīn*].





# Concerning the Author, Shaikh ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī

## A Brief Introduction by the Translator<sup>1</sup>

### The Author’s Names and Titles

A rich store of information about the author of *Sufficient Provision for Seekers of the Path of Truth* is conveniently available, to those familiar with the religious and spiritual tradition of Islām, in his names, his surnames, and the many titles conferred upon him by his devoted followers. It is not unusual for these to take up several lines in an Arabic manuscript, but let us start with the short form of the author’s name as it appears on the cover and title page of this book: *Shaikh ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī*.

**Shaikh:** A term applied throughout the Islamic world to respected persons of recognized seniority in learning, experience and wisdom. Its basic meaning in Arabic is “an elder; a man over fifty years of age.” (The spellings *Sheikh* and *Shaykh* may also be encountered in English-language publications.)

**‘Abd al-Qādir:** This is the author’s personal name, meaning “Servant [or Slave] of the All-Powerful.” (The form *‘Abdul Qādir*, which the reader may come across elsewhere, is simply an alternative transliteration of the Arabic spelling.) It has always been a common practice, in the Muslim community, to give a male child a name in which ‘Abd is prefixed to one of the Names of Allāh.

**al-Jīlānī:** A surname ending in *-ī* will often indicate the bearer’s place of birth. Shaikh ‘Abd al-Qādir was born in the Iranian district

<sup>1</sup>Reproduced for the convenience of the reader, with slight modifications from the version printed on pp. xiii–xix of: Shaikh ‘Abd al-Qādir. *Revelations of the Unseen (Futūḥ al-Ghaib)*. Translated from the Arabic by Muhtar Holland. Houston, Texas: Al-Baz Publishing, 1992.

of Gīlān, south of the Caspian Sea, in A.H. 470/1077-8 C.E. (In some texts, the Persian spelling *Gīlānī* is used instead of the arabicized form *al-Jīlānī*. The abbreviated form *al-Jīlī*, which may also be encountered, should not be confused with the surname of the venerable ‘Abd al-Karīm al-Jīlī, author of the celebrated work *al-Insān al-Kāmil*, who came from Jīl in the district of Baghdād.)

Let us now consider a slightly longer version of the Shaikh’s name, as it occurs near the beginning of *Al-Faṭḥ ar-Rabbānī* [The Sublime Revelation]: *Sayyidunā ‘sh-Shaikh Muḥyi’d-Dīn Abū Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Qādir (Raḍiya’llāhu ‘anh)*.

***Sayyidunā ‘sh-Shaikh:*** “Our Master, the Shaikh.” A writer who regards himself as a Qādirī, a devoted follower of Shaikh ‘Abd al-Qādir, will generally refer to the latter as *Sayyidunā* [our Master], or *Sayyidī* [my Master].

***Muḥyi’d-Dīn:*** “Reviver of the Religion.” It is widely acknowledged by historians, non-Muslim as well as Muslim, that Shaikh ‘Abd al-Qādir displayed great courage in reaffirming the traditional teachings of Islām, in an era when sectarianism was rife, and when materialistic and rationalistic tendencies were predominant in all sections of society. In matters of Islamic jurisprudence [*fiqh*] and theology [*kalām*], he adhered quite strictly to the highly “orthodox” school of Imām Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal.

***Abū Muḥammad:*** “Father of Muḥammad.” In the Arabic system of nomenclature, a man’s surnames usually include the name of his first-born son, with the prefix *Abū* [Father of—].

***Raḍiya’llāhu ‘anh:*** “May Allāh be well pleased with him!” This benediction is the one customarily pronounced—and spelled out in writing—after mentioning the name of a Companion of the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace). The preference for this particular invocation is yet another mark of the extraordinary status held by Shaikh ‘Abd al-Qādir in the eyes of his devoted followers. Finally, we must note some important elements contained within this even longer version: *al-Ghawṭh al-A’zam Sulṭān al-Awliyā’ Sayyidunā ‘sh-Shaikh Muḥyi’d-Dīn ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī al-Ḥasanī al-Ḥusainī (Raḍiya’llāhu ‘anh)*.

***al-Ghawth al-A‘zam:*** “The Supreme Helper” (or, “The Mightiest Succor”). *Ghawth* is an Arabic word meaning: (1) A cry for aid or succor. (2) Aid, help, succor; deliverance from adversity. (3) The chief of the Saints, who is empowered by Allāh to bring succor to suffering humanity, in response to His creatures’ cry for help in times of extreme adversity.

***Sulṭān al-Awliyā’:*** “The Sultan of the Saints.” This reinforces the preceding title, emphasizing the supremacy of the *Ghawth* above all other orders of sanctity.

***al-Ḥasanī al-Ḥusainī:*** “The descendant of both al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusain, the grandsons of the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace).” To quote the Turkish author, Shaikh Muzaffer Ozak Efendi (may Allāh bestow His mercy upon him): “The lineage of Shaikh ‘Abd al-Qādir is known as the Chain of Gold, since both his parents were descendants of the Messenger (Allāh bless him and give him peace). His noble father, ‘Abdullāh, traced his descent by way of Imām Ḥasan, while his revered mother, Umm al-Khair, traced hers through Imām Ḥusain.”

As for the many other surnames, titles and honorific appellations that have been conferred upon Shaikh ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī, it may suffice at this point to mention *al-Bāz al-Ashhab* [The Gray Falcon].

### The Author’s Life in Baghdād

Through the mists of legend surrounding the life of Shaikh ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī, it is possible to discern the outlines of the following biographical sketch:

In A.H. 488, at the age of eighteen, he left his native province to become a student in the great capital city of Baghdād, the hub of political, commercial and cultural activity, and the center of religious learning in the world of Islām. After studying traditional sciences under such teachers as the prominent Ḥanbalī jurist [*faqīh*], Abū Sa’d ‘Alī al-Mukharrimī, he encountered a more spiritually oriented instructor in the saintly person of Abu’l-Khair Ḥammād ad-Dabbās. Then, instead of embarking on his own professorial career, he abandoned the city and spent twenty-five years as a wanderer in the desert regions of ‘Irāq.



He was over fifty years old by the time he returned to Baghdād, in A.H. 521/1127 C.E., and began to preach in public. His hearers were profoundly affected by the style and content of his lectures, and his reputation grew and spread through all sections of society. He moved into the school [*madrasa*] belonging to his old teacher al-Mukharrimī, but the premises eventually proved inadequate. In A.H. 528, pious donations were applied to the construction of a residence and guesthouse [*ribāt*], capable of housing the Shaikh and his large family, as well as providing accommodation for his pupils and space for those who came from far and wide to attend his regular sessions [*majālis*].

He lived to a ripe old age, and continued his work until his very last breath, as we know from the accounts of his final moments recorded in the Addendum to *Revelations of the Unseen*.

In the words of Shaikh Muzaffer Ozak Efendi: "The venerable 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī passed on to the Realm of Divine Beauty in A.H. 561/1166 C.E., and his blessed mausoleum in Baghdād is still a place of pious visitation. He is noted for his extraordinary spiritual experiences and exploits, as well as his memorable sayings and wise teachings. It is rightly said of him that 'he was born in love, grew in perfection, and met his Lord in the perfection of love.' May the All-Glorious Lord bring us in contact with his lofty spiritual influence!"

### The Author's Literary Works

*Al-Ghunya li-ṭālibī ṭarīq al-ḥaqq* [Sufficient Provision for Seekers of the Path of Truth]. Arabic text published in two parts by Dār al-Albāb, Damascus, n.d., 192 pp. + 200 pp. English translation in progress; publication in five volumes scheduled for 1997 by Al-Bāz Publishing.

In his own introductory remarks, Shaikh 'Abd al-Qādir explains how he came to compose this monumental work: "One of my friends had been pressing me, urging me in very emphatic terms to compose this book, because of his excellent appreciation of what is right and proper... I came to recognize the sincerity of his wish to acquire real knowledge of modes of behavior consistent with the sacred law..., real knowledge of the Maker (Almighty and Glorious is He)..., instruction in the Qur'ān and Prophetic utterances, and real

knowledge of the morals and ethics of the righteous. All of these subjects we shall review in the course of the book, so that it may serve as a helper to him in following the path of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), in carrying out His commandments and observing His prohibitions.”

***Al-Faṭḥ ar-Rabbānī* [The Sublime Revelation].** A collection of sixty-two discourses delivered by Shaikh ‘Abd al-Qādir in the years A.H. 545-546/1150-1152 C.E. Arabic text published by Dār al-Albāb, Damascus, n.d. Arabic text with Urdu translation: Madīna Publishing Co., Karachi, 1989. Translated from the Arabic by Muhtar Holland. Houston, Texas: Al-Baz Publishing, Inc., 1992.

Even a non-Muslim scholar like D.S. Margoliouth was so favorably impressed by the content and style of *Al-Faṭḥ ar-Rabbānī* that he wrote:<sup>2</sup> “The sermons included in [this work] are some of the very best in Muslim literature: the spirit which they breathe is one of charity and philanthropy: the preacher would like to ‘close the gates of Hell and open those of Paradise to all mankind.’ He employs Ṣūfī technicalities very rarely, and none that would occasion the ordinary reader much difficulty....”

***Malḥūzāt* [Utterances].** A loosely organized compilation of talks and sayings by Shaikh ‘Abd al-Qādir, almost equal in total length to *Revelations of the Unseen*. Frequently treated as a kind of appendix or supplement to manuscript and printed versions of *Al-Faṭḥ ar-Rabbānī*. Translated from the Arabic by Muhtar Holland. Houston, Texas: Al-Baz Publishing, Inc., 1992.

***Futūḥ al-Ghaib* [Revelations of the Unseen].** A collection of seventy-eight discourses. The Arabic text, edited by Muḥammad Sālim al-Bawwāb, has been published by Dār al-Albāb, Damascus, 1986. German translation: W. Braune. *Die Futūḥ al-Gaib des ‘Abd al-Qādir*. Berlin and Leipzig: Walter de Gruyter & Co., 1933. English translations: (1) M. Aftab-ud-Din Ahmad. *Futub Al-Ghaib [The Revelations of the Unseen]*. Lahore, Pakistan: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf. Repr. 1986. (2) Shaikh ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī. *Revelations of the Unseen (Futūḥ al-Ghaib)*. Translated from the Arabic by Muhtar Holland. Houston, Texas: Al-Baz Publishing, Inc., 1992.

<sup>2</sup> In his article “‘Abd al-Kādir” in *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (also printed in *Shorter Encyclopaedia of Islam*. Leiden, Netherlands: E.J. Brill, 1961).

*Jalā' al-Khawāṭir* [The Removal of Cares].<sup>3</sup> A collection of forty-five discourses by Shaikh 'Abd al-Qādir. Arabic text with Urdu translation, published by Maktaba Nabawiyya, Lahore, n.d. English translation by Muhtar Holland published by Al-Bāz Publishing, Inc., Florida, 1997.

*Sirr al-Asrār* [The Secret of Secrets]. A short work, divided into twenty-four chapters, in which “the realities within our faith and our path are divulged.” English translation: *The Secret of Secrets* by Ḥaḍrat 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jilānī, interpreted by Shaykh Tosun Bayrak al-Jerrahi al-Halveti. Cambridge, England: The Islamic Texts Society, 1992.

Other works attributed to Shaikh 'Abd al-Qādir include short treatises on some of the Divine Names; litanies [*awrād/aḥzāb*]; prayers and supplications [*da'awāt/munājāt*]; mystical poems [*qaṣā'id*].

May Allāh forgive our mistakes and failings, and may He bestow His blessings upon all connected with our project—especially our gracious readers! *Āmīn*.

Muhtar Holland



<sup>3</sup>Also known as *Jalā' al-Kbāṭir* [The Removal of Care] (see Translator's Introduction to this volume.)

## About the Translator

Muhtar Holland was born in 1935, in the ancient city of Durham in the North East of England. This statement may be considered anachronistic, however, since he did not bear the name Muhtar until 1969, when he was moved—by powerful experiences in the *latihan kejiwaan* of Subud—to embrace the religion of Islām.\*

At the age of four, according to an entry in his father's diary, he said to a man who asked his name: "I'm a stranger to myself." During his years at school, he was drawn most strongly to the study of languages, which seemed to offer signposts to guide the stranger on his "Journey Home," apart from their practical usefulness to one who loved to spend his vacations traveling—at first on a bicycle—through foreign lands. Serious courses in Latin, Greek, French, Spanish and Danish, with additional smatterings of Anglo-Saxon, Italian, German and Dutch. Travels in France, Germany, Belgium, Holland and Denmark. Then a State Scholarship and up to Balliol College, Oxford, for a degree course centered on the study of Arabic and Turkish. Travels in Turkey and Syria. Then National Service in the Royal Navy, with most of the two years spent on an intensive course in the Russian language.

In the years since graduation from Oxford and Her Majesty's Senior Service, Mr. Holland has held academic posts at the University of Toronto, Canada; at the School of Oriental and African Studies in the University of London, England (with a five-month leave to study Islamic Law in Cairo, Egypt); and at the Universiti Kebangsaan in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia (followed by a six-month sojourn in Indonesia). He also worked as Senior Research Fellow at the Islamic Foundation in Leicester, England, and as Director of the Nūr al-Islām Translation Center in Valley Cottage, New York.

\*The name Muhtar was received at that time from Bapak Muhammad Subuh Sumohadiwidjojo, of Wisma Subud, Jakarta, in response to a request for a suitable Muslim name. In strict academic transliteration from the Arabic, the spelling would be *Mukhtār*. The form *Muchtar* is probably more common in Indonesia than *Muhtar*, which happens to coincide with the modern Turkish spelling of the name.

His freelance activities have mostly been devoted to writing and translating in various parts of the world, including Scotland and California. He made his Pilgrimage [*Hajj*] to Mecca in 1980.

Published works include the following:

Al-Ghazālī. *On the Duties of Brotherhood*. Translated from the Classical Arabic by Muhtar Holland. London: Latimer New Dimensions, 1975. New York: Overlook Press, 1977. Repr. 1980 and 1993.

Sheikh Muzaffer Ozak al-Jerrahi. *The Unveiling of Love*. Translated from the Turkish by Muhtar Holland. New York: Inner Traditions, 1981. Westport, Ct.: Pir Publications, 1990.

Ibn Taymīya. *Public Duties in Islām*. Translated from the Arabic by Muhtar Holland. Leicester, England: Islamic Foundation, 1982.

Hasan Shushud. *Masters of Wisdom of Central Asia*. Translated from the Turkish by Muhtar Holland. Ellingsstring, England: Coombe Springs Press, 1983.

Al-Ghazālī. *Inner Dimensions of Islamic Worship*. Translated from the Arabic by Muhtar Holland. Leicester, England: Islamic Foundation, 1983.

Sheikh Muzaffer Ozak al-Jerrahi. *Irshād*. Translated [from the Turkish] with an Introduction by Muhtar Holland. Warwick, New York: Amity House, 1988. Westport, Ct.: Pir Publications, 1990.

Sheikh Muzaffer Ozak al-Jerrahi. *Blessed Virgin Mary*. Translation from the Original Turkish by Muhtar Holland. Westport, Ct.: Pir Publications, 1991.

Sheikh Muzaffer Ozak al-Jerrahi. *The Garden of Dervishes*. Translation from the Original Turkish by Muhtar Holland. Westport, Ct.: Pir Publications, 1991.

Sheikh Muzaffer Ozak al-Jerrahi. *Adornment of Hearts*. Translation from the Original Turkish by Muhtar Holland and Sixtina Friedrich. Westport, Ct.: Pir Publications, 1991.

Sheikh Muzaffer Ozak al-Jerrahi. *Asbki's Divan*. Translation from the Original Turkish by Muhtar Holland and Sixtina Friedrich. Westport, Ct.: Pir Publications, 1991.

Shaikh 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī. *Revelations of the Unseen (Futūḥ al-Ghaib)*. Translated from the Arabic by Muhtar Holland. Houston, Texas: Al-Baz Publishing, Inc., 1992.

Shaikh 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī. *The Sublime Revelation (al-Faṭḥ ar-Rabbānī)*. Translated from the Arabic by Muhtar Holland. Houston, Texas: Al-Baz Publishing, Inc., 1992.

Shaikh 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī. *Utterances (Malfūzāt)*. Translated from the Arabic by Muhtar Holland. Houston, Texas: Al-Baz Publishing, Inc., 1992.





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4. **The Removal of Cares** (*Jalā’ al-Khawātir*) (\$25.00)  
45 Discourses by Shaikh ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī

## Books scheduled for publication in 1997 include:

1. **Sufficient Provision for Seekers of the Path of Truth**  
(*Al-Ghunya li-Ṭālibī Ṭarīq al-Ḥaqq*)  
by Shaikh ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī (may Allāh be well pleased with him)  
This encyclopedic work is a complete resource on the inner and outer aspects of Islām. The translation will be published in 5 or 6 volumes; all volumes will be available. Translated by Muhtar Holland.
2. **The Proper Conduct of Marriage in Islām** (*Ādāb an-Nikāḥ*)  
by Imām al-Ghazālī  
This is Book 12 of *Iḥyā’ ‘Ulūm ad-Dīn*.
3. **Risālat at-Tawḥīd**  
by Shaikh Walī Raslān b. Ya’qūb ad-Dimashqī (d. A.H. 695)  
This is a Risāla on *shirk khafī* (hidden *shirk*). *Shirk* is associating partners with Allāh. Also in the book is a commentary by Shaikh Zakariyyā’ al-Ansārī called “*Kitāb Faṭḥ ar-Raḥmān*.” Also in the book is a commentary on the commentary by Shaikh ‘Alī ibn ‘Aṭīyya ‘Alawān al-Hamawī (d. A.H. 936) called “*Sharḥ Faṭḥ ar-Raḥmān*.” This is a very important book.



**4. Fifteen Letters**

(*Khamsata ‘Ashara Maktūban* otherwise known as *Maktūbāt*)

Fifteen letters by Shaikh ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī to one of his disciples. Originally written in Persian, they were translated into Arabic by ‘Alī Ḥusāmu’d-dīn al-Muttaqī (the Devout).

**5. Necklaces of Gems (*Qalā’id al-Jawāhir*)**

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